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The influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change

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The influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change

What's in it for me?

Sjoerd van den Heuvel

The influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan Tilburg University op gezag van de
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“Quand tu veux construire un bateau,
ne commence pas par rassembler du bois,
couper des planches et distribuer du travail,
mais réveille au sein des hommes
le désir de la mer grande et large”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The central question addressed in this thesis is: *how does the psychological contract influence the attitude of employees to organizational change?* Most of the research on the psychological contract in the context of organizational change has focused on how changes in the organization or the employment relationship influence the content or state of the psychological contract. As one of the first in its field, this research explores the influence of the psychological contract on the attitude of employees towards organizational change (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Central relationship explored in this thesis



However, insight into this relationship is only of value if we know what other factors determine the attitude of employees to organizational change and how the psychological contract is related to these factors. Besides the psychological contract and attitude towards change, the variables trust, organizational commitment, engagement, change history, change information, perceived need for change and type of change are therefore examined in this research as well.

The scientific contribution of this research is three-fold. The first contribution concerns the central relationship explored in this research. Although numerous studies have examined outcomes of the psychological contract or antecedents of change recipients' responses to organizational change, empirical research on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change is scarce. This is somewhat surprising, since theoretical evidence for such a relationship exists, and since the psychological contract is strongly interwoven with already known attitudes towards change antecedents such as trust, communication and leadership. Secondly, all studies discussed in this thesis have conceptualized and operationalized attitude towards change as a three-dimensional construct, comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. Only recently have researchers begun to consider the responses of employees to organizational change as a multidimensional construct, most likely because the limitations of popular conceptualizations such as resistance or readiness to change have become increasingly apparent. The conceptualization of responses to change as a multidimensional attitude does considerably more justice to the broad range and variety of potential change recipients' reactions to an organizational change. And thirdly, this research not only focuses on change process variables, which are commonly studied in organizational change literature, but it also assesses the internal organizational context, change recipients' evaluation of the change itself,

and perceived characteristics of the change as potential influencers of employees' responses to change.

Several distinctive characteristics of this research contribute to the answering of the central research question. First of all, as empirical research on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change is lacking, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Secondly, the central relationship was explored from a managerial as well as a change recipients' perspective. Thirdly, over 1500 respondents across multiple samples participated in the surveys and interviews, and in order to obtain a diverse set of respondents, organizations and organizational changes, the data were collected in various economic and industrial sectors across nine European countries. Finally, multiple methods of analysis were used, including a grounded theory approach to analyze the data in the qualitative study, as well as regression analysis, variance analysis, factor analysis and structural equation modeling for application in the quantitative studies.

Throughout the course of the research, the practical applicability of the results has been a key concern. On account of globalization and technological developments, HR professionals and change managers are increasingly challenged by the complexity and pervasiveness of organizational change. Successful change implementation is becoming ever more important with a view to staying ahead of the competition and to preserving one's capacity to attract talented new employees, as well as to retaining key contributors. This thesis thus seeks to help practitioners determine which strings to pull to achieve successful organizational change. The practical relevance of the present research does not merely lie in the specific findings and recommendations presented in the separate studies, nor does this thesis draw only practical conclusions. This thesis aims to be of substantial value for practitioners by proposing a shift in mindset among the ones leading organizational changes. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to encourage practitioners to evaluate and if necessary to revise common change management approaches, which often focus on managing a particular organizational change as an independent event, without sufficiently considering the organization's internal context and change climate.

The remainder of this introductory chapter describes the two central concepts, namely *psychological contract* and *attitude towards change*, followed by the three key issues addressed in this research. A detailed outline of the thesis concludes this chapter. The subsequent chapters present six studies that each offer a unique contribution to answering the central question, either on account of the variables that are examined in the study, the type of analysis that is used, the characteristics of the sample, or the research design. In the final chapter the overall results are discussed per key issue, which adds up to answering the thesis's central research question.

Organizational change is complex. The psychological contract is perhaps even more complex. Obviously, no single research can answer all questions, and this research is no exception. However, as one respondent recommended during an interview conducted for this research: "always under-promise and over-fulfill". This thesis intends to heed that advice...

1.2 Psychological contract

The term psychological contract emerged in the 1960s. Argyris (1960, p. 96) introduced the concept 'psychological work contract' to describe the implicit understanding of the employment contract between employees and their foremen in a factory setting (Shore et al., 2004; Anderson & Schalk, 2008). Two years later, Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl and Solley (1962) defined the psychological contract in terms of mutual expectations that govern the relationship between two parties. Schein (1965) expanded this conceptualization by stating that the set of mutual expectations not only comprised expectations about the fundamental characteristics of the employment relationship, such as payment, but that it also included perceptions of rights, privileges and obligations. Until the late 1980s, virtually all psychological contract studies applied Schein's (1965) conceptualization of the psychological contract (Shore et al., 2004).

However, this early definition gave rise to some problems, since it compared expectations on the organizational and individual levels (Freese, 2007). Rousseau (1990) made a significant contribution to the conceptualization of the psychological contract by narrowing it down to the individual's beliefs about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer. Following this definition, the psychological contract is an "intra-individual perception that exists in the eye of the beholder" (Schalk & Roe, 2007), consisting of beliefs about one's own obligations as well those of the employer. Although an individual belief, the employee holding the psychological contract perceives it as a mutual agreement, assuming a shared understanding of the perceived obligations for the employee as well as the employer.

Rousseau's definition was influenced by social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1965), considering the psychological contract as an exchange relationship between an employee and the employer. In this reciprocal agreement, the party that makes a contribution in the exchange relationship expects a return from the other party, in order for the exchange to be balanced again. Furthermore, Rousseau's definition comprises the term obligations instead of expectations. When an employee's expectations – which might be based on experiences at earlier employers or experiences of friends – are not met, it does not necessarily mean that a promise has been broken (Rousseau, 1990). Moreover, violating perceived promises causes more intense emotional responses than not meeting expectations does (Rousseau, 1989; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). Thus, a psychological contract comprises obligations which are based on perceived implicit and explicit promises. Finally, the 'other party' in the psychological contract, i.e. the employer or organization, is not represented by one person. Not only can a single employee have a different team leader, functional leader and hierarchical leader simultaneously, other organizational representatives such as highly trusted senior colleagues and top management also influence the implicit and explicit promises as perceived by the employee. The organization-side

of the psychological contract is therefore represented by a set of organizational agents (Rousseau, 1995).

1.2.1 Psychological contract fulfillment

Most of the time, an employee is not aware of the promises that make up the psychological contract. However, triggering events can make the employee aware of the psychological contract's content and the extent to which the organization has lived up to its promises (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994). For example, during organizational changes lots of new promises are made, and the organization might no longer be able or willing to live up to promises made previously. Also during performance assessment interviews or the yearly evaluation interview, the employee may be triggered to evaluate the psychological contract to determine whether perceived promises regarding rewards, development opportunities or work-life balance have been met. Such an evaluation might lead to a "discrepancy between an employee's understanding of what was promised and the employee's perception of what he or she has actually received" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 231). This discrepancy is commonly called a breach (see, e.g., Conway & Briner, 2002; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Rigotti, 2009) or violation (see, e.g., Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Cassar, 2001; Sutton & Griffin, 2004) of the psychological contract. However, besides a negative discrepancy, a positive discrepancy can occur as well, so that the conceptualization of discrepancy in terms of breach or violation neglects the fact that a psychological contract has the potential to be over-fulfilled (Turnley & Feldman, 1999). This thesis therefore uses the term 'psychological contract fulfillment' to assess the perceived discrepancy between what was promised and what was offered, which can be either negative or positive.

1.3 Attitude towards change

Already since the late 1940s, scholars have been studying how employees respond to organizational change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). As a result of the growing awareness that "successful organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes, rather than merely overcoming resistance" (Piderit, 2000, p. 783), a variety of concepts emerged that all intended to conceptualize the responses of employees to organizational change. However, there has been little consistency in the labels and definitions used (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). Accordingly, a variety of positively phrased conceptualizations exist such as readiness for change (e.g. Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007), commitment to change (e.g. Chen & Wang, 2007), acceptance of change (e.g. Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006), and openness to change (e.g. Wanberg & Banas, 2000), as well as negatively phrased ones such as cynicism about change (e.g. Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005) and resistance to change (e.g. Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). In recent years, however, the range of concepts seems to have narrowed down to two core concepts, namely readiness for change and

resistance to change. Bouckennooghe (2010), who conducted a narrative review on the attitudes towards change literature, incorporating both conceptual and empirical articles published between 1993 and 2007, found that a vast majority of the studies focused on one of the two concepts. Of the conceptual articles included in his review, more than 90% focused on either readiness for change or resistance to change.

However, by conceptualizing and operationalizing change recipients' responses to change in either positive or negative terms, a potential opposite response is neglected. For example, if the term resistance to change is adopted, the most positive scenario is an absence of resistance. Yet an absence of resistance does not imply enthusiasm or proactive cooperation with the change. Similarly, an absence of readiness for change does not necessarily imply active obstruction or complaining to colleagues and management. Therefore, the more neutral and all-embracing term of 'attitude towards change' not only connects the various existing conceptualizations (Bouckennooghe, 2010), but it does considerably more justice to the broad range of potential employee responses to organizational change. For these reasons, the present research adopts the multidimensional attitude towards change construct to represent change recipients' responses to organizational change¹.

1.3.1 Affect, behavior and cognition

Oreg et al. (2011), who reviewed quantitative empirical studies on change recipients' reactions to organizational change published between 1948 and 2007, found that these reactions have been conceptualized in terms of affect such as stress (e.g. Bordia, Jones, Gallois, Callan, & DiFonzo, 2006), behavior such as resistance (e.g. Dent & Goldberg, 1999), and cognition such as sensemaking (e.g. Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). Oreg et al. (2011) noted that until 2007 only a few studies had focused on all three components (see, e.g., Ashford, 1988; Oreg, 2003, study 7) and that only one study explicitly sought to measure each of the three change reaction components (see Oreg, 2006). However, a focus on only one of these components at the expense of the others would seem to paint an incomplete picture (Piderit, 2000). This research therefore builds on the work by Piderit (2000), who advocated "a new wave of research on employee responses to change, conceptualized as multidimensional attitudes" (p. 789). Following early work by Elizur and Guttman (1976), who examined the structure of attitudes toward work and technological change within an organization, an attitude to change comprises an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. Affective responses to change concern employees' feelings such as anger, anxiety or enthusiasm; behavioral responses involve actions or intentions to act such as complaining, convincing or obstructing; and cognitive responses concern the thoughts and beliefs regarding the

¹ Throughout this thesis the label 'attitude towards change' is applied to represent the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational change. However, study 1, which was the first study conducted in this research, still applies the term 'resistance to change'. Nevertheless, this first study does already adopt Piderit's (2000) three-dimensional perspective as well as Oreg's (2006) three-dimensional change attitude scale.

necessity, advantages and disadvantages of the change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Elizur & Guttman, 1976; Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006).

Although a large body of research is available on the tripartite view of attitudes (see, e.g., Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960; Ajzen, 1984), empirical quantitative as well as qualitative research on the multidimensional attitude towards change is lacking. Perhaps the main reason for this is that a valid and reliable measurement of the construct was missing until the development of the change attitude scale by Oreg (2006). By conceptualizing a change recipient's responses to change as a multidimensional attitude that comprises an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component, and by making use of Oreg's (2006) change attitude scale in all quantitative studies, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the employee's feelings, behaviors and thoughts in times of organizational change.

1.4 Key Issues

1.4.1 The psychological contract as a determinant of the three attitude towards change dimensions

Three key issues are addressed in this thesis. Together, they need to answer the central question of the research: *how does the psychological contract influence the attitude of employees to organizational change?* The first key issue is to explore whether the psychological contract is a determinant of attitude towards change. The primary focus will be on the direct influence of the psychological contract on the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of the multidimensional attitude towards change construct.

As assumed by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1965), an employee strives for balance in the exchanges between himself and the organization. The expected reciprocity in the exchange relationship causes an employee to attempt to restore balance if an imbalance in exchanges is perceived. As indicated earlier, psychological contract theory is based on social exchange and equity theory. Thus, when a psychological contract is under-fulfilled, an employee will try to restore the balance in the exchange relationship. This can result in a decrease of trust (Robinson, 1996), commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) and extra-role behaviors (Turnley & Feldman, 2000), as well as in an increase of turnover (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003) and intention to quit (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

Concerning the influence of the psychological contract on employee responses to organizational change, there is only some theoretical reasoning and a limited amount of empirical research. In their field study in a hospital implementing empowerment among nurses, Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) found that employees who held a more transactional psychological contract, compared to a more relational one, were less willing to accept poorly justified organizational change. Rousseau (2003) furthermore emphasized "the critical role that schemas play in psychological contracting as sources of stability, adaptation, and resistance to change" (p. 233),

and argued that stable schemas tend to resist change, because of the psychological threats that changes generate. Even though psychological contract fulfillment has been found to be related to employees' affective, behavioral and cognitive responses (Zhao et al., 2007), no prior research has explored the relationship between the psychological contract and affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change.

Whereas the *content* of the psychological contract is addressed in the qualitative study (study 2), the primary focus in this thesis is on the *fulfillment* of the psychological contract. With regard to the employee and organization-side of the psychological contract, it should be noted that the main emphasis is on the organization-side, although the employee-side is considered as well in study 1 and 3.

1.4.2 Pre-change and change antecedents of attitude towards change

The second key issue concerns the factors other than the psychological contract that influence an employee's attitude towards change. To identify the influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change, it is important to understand what other factors influence change recipients' attitude towards change and how the psychological contract is related to those antecedents. In their quantitative literature review on attitudes, Oreg et al. (2011) mapped out the antecedents of affective, behavioral and cognitive reactions of change recipients to organizational change. In their review they identified five main antecedent categories, namely (1) change recipient characteristics (2) internal context, (3) change process, (4) perceived benefit/harm, and (5) change content. The first two categories comprise *pre-change* antecedents "which constitute conditions that are independent of the organizational change and which existed prior to the introduction of the change", while the last three categories comprise *change* antecedents "which involve aspects of the change itself that influence change recipients' explicit reactions" (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 26).

The first category, *change recipient characteristics*, refers to differences in individuals' personality traits, coping styles, motivational needs or demographics. *Internal context* is related to the characteristics of the organizational environment prior to the change. *Change process* antecedents concern the manner in which the change is implemented. According to Oreg et al. (2011), this is the most frequently studied category. The fourth antecedent category, *perceived benefit/harm*, refers to the extent to which the change is perceived as personally beneficial or harmful. Finally, *change content* is related to the mere nature of the change, i.e. the type of change.

As mentioned before, studies that explicitly seek to measure each of the three change reaction components are scarce (Oreg et al., 2011). Accordingly, only a few studies have explored antecedents of all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct (see, e.g., Oreg, 2006). The present research therefore makes a considerable contribution to this largely unexplored field of research by exploring the relations between antecedents and all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct. Given that this research is merely a first step towards a better understanding of the antecedents of the multifaceted construct of attitude towards

change, and that not every previously identified antecedent of one of the three dimensions can be included in the research, a selection of antecedents was made beforehand. Besides the psychological contract, seven additional variables are included in this research. As shown in Table 1, both pre-change and change antecedents were selected, and four of the five antecedent categories identified by Oreg et al. (2011) are represented. A conceptualization of each variable (except the psychological contract, which has already been discussed) is provided in the next part of this section.

TABLE 1
Antecedents of attitude towards change explored in this thesis

	Antecedent category (Oreg et al., 2011)	Variable
2	Internal context (<i>pre-change antecedent</i>)	Psychological contract Trust Organizational commitment Engagement Change history
3	Change process (<i>change antecedent</i>)	Change information
4	Perceived benefit/harm (<i>change antecedent</i>)	Perceived need for change
5	Change content (<i>change antecedent</i>)	Type of change

Trust. This research conceptualizes trust as one's "expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 238). In the context of the employment relationship, trust refers to the exchange between the employee and the perceived organizational representatives.

Organizational commitment. An employee's commitment to the organization is regarded as an affective attitude that represents the emotional attachment of the employee to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). More specifically, organizational commitment is conceptualized as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, involvement in and loyalty to a particular organization (Steers, 1977; Fenton-O'Creevy, Winfrow, Lydka, & Morris, 1997).

Engagement. Work engagement is conceptualized as a positive work-related state of mind, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli, Bakker, & van Rhenen, 2009).

Change history. The variable of change history refers to the extent to which an individual employee perceives that past organizational changes were successfully implemented by the organization and its management (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997; Metselaar, 1997; Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007).

Change information. Based on the operationalization of Wanberg and Banas (2000) who built on Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994), change information is conceptualized as the extent to which the employee perceives that information about the change is received timely, is useful, is adequate and is answering his or her questions about the change.

Perceived need for change. Although the term ‘burning platform’, which is often used among practitioners (Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, & Walker, 2007), is probably the most expressive interpretation of perceived need for change, the present research adopts Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder’s (1993) conceptualization, and defines perceived need for change as the perceived discrepancy between a present state and a desired end-state.

Type of change. The conceptualization of the type of organizational change is based on the work of McNamara (2006), who distinguished four dimensions. First, a change can be planned or unplanned. Unplanned changes occur as a result of an unexpected event, such as a scandal reported in the media or a problem with one of the organization’s products which causes an immediate drop in customers. Planned changes are changes initiated by organization leaders, following a perceived need to implement a change such as a reorganization or the introduction of a new system. The second type of change dimension identified by McNamara (2006) is organization-wide versus subsystem change. Examples of organization-wide changes are large restructurings, mergers and acquisitions, cultural changes and adjustments of the core processes or products of the organization. Subsystem changes refer to changes that only impact one department or a team. Examples are changes of departmental processes, the development of a new product or service and the appointment of a new department head. Thirdly, McNamara (2006) distinguishes transformational and incremental change. Transformational changes are radical and fundamental transformations, for example of the organizational structure. By contrast, incremental changes occur in a more continuous or stepwise manner. Continuous changes often serve to gradually improve processes or systems.

The last dimension defined by McNamara (2006) is remedial versus developmental change. Remedial changes aim to cure a particular problem, which is often an urgent problem. Examples are changes in order to counter high turnover rates caused by aggressive recruitment practices by competitors, or changes that need to solve substantial budget deficits. Since a remedial change is focused on a particular problem, its success depends to a large extent on whether the problem is solved or not. Developmental changes, on the other hand, seek to improve an already successful situation. An organization might for example expand its range of products or services, or improve its sales processes in order to maintain its position as market leader. Although every type of change dimension can be viewed as a continuum, it is obvious that, for example, planned changes may contain unplanned elements and vice versa. Changes can furthermore combine the type of change dimensions in a variety of ways. Planned changes can be implemented organization-wide or only in a subsystem, and remedial changes can occur in a transformational as well as developmental manner. Finally, it should be noted that the present research assesses the individual’s perception of the type of change. Thus, although a change might for example be largely planned and impact the entire organization (as perceived by management or researchers), an individual employee might perceive the change as fairly unplanned and as primarily impacting his or her department. In this research, the primary focus will be on the moderating role of the perceived type of change on the central relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. For that reason, type of change will be considered as the third key issue of this thesis.

1.4.3 The influence of mediators and moderators on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change

The third key issue concerns the process by which the psychological contract influences the affective, the behavioral and the cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change. It is therefore examined how mediators and moderators influence this relationship.

The psychological contract has been found to be a strong predictor of work-related outcomes such as trust (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1996) and organizational commitment (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Cassar & Briner, 2011). These variables have also been found to be predictors of employee responses to organizational change (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Ertürk, 2008; Oreg, 2006; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2003). From an exchange theory perspective, the necessity of mutual trust underlying the employment relationship is indisputable. While reflecting on the relationship between trust and the psychological contract, Robinson (1996) argued that trust in one's employer "may influence an employee's recognition of a breach, his or her interpretation of that perceived breach if it is recognized, and his or her reaction to that perceived breach" (p. 576). In this research, trust is therefore examined both as an antecedent and as a consequence of psychological contract fulfillment.

Besides trust, an employee needs to experience sufficient levels of organizational commitment and engagement to continue contributing to the exchange relationship with his or her employer. A constructive response to organizational change is an example of such a contribution. However, an employee does not necessarily perceive a constructive response to a change as an in-role obligation. Therefore, substantial levels of organizational commitment and engagement are required to induce such extra-role behavior. A well-fulfilled psychological contract contributes to the emergence of organizational commitment and engagement and for that reason, organizational commitment and engagement are examined as mediators in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change.

Finally, the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change is explored. In his review study, Bouckenoghe (2010) concluded that "research on employees' attitudes toward change (for all three components) has been mainly examined in a planned change tradition" (p. 514). He therefore opts for more pluralism in the changes considered in attitude towards change research, i.e. the consideration of change other than planned or top-down driven changes. This research therefore examines the moderating role of type of change on the central relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. More specifically, the research focuses on the moderating role of unplanned versus planned change, organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change and remedial versus developmental change (McNamara, 2006).

1.5 Thesis outline

In the following chapters, six studies are presented that together need to answer the central research question addressed in this thesis. An overview of the designs of the studies and the variables included in each study is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Overview of the six studies: chapter (ch.), title, main variables and design

Ch.	Title and main variables	Design
2	<p>The relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change during organizational transformations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Fulfillment organization-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Fulfillment employee-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Type of change</i> ▪ <i>Attitude towards change</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey study ▪ N = 208 ▪ Netherlands
3	<p>What's in it for me? A managerial perspective on the influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interview study ▪ N = 39 ▪ Belgium France Germany Italy Netherlands Portugal Spain Switzerland
4	<p>The influence of psychological contract fulfillment on attitude towards change: the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Fulfillment organization-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Fulfillment employee-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Trust</i> ▪ <i>Organizational commitment</i> ▪ <i>Attitude towards change</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey study ▪ N = 197 ▪ Netherlands
5	<p>Does a well-informed employee have a more positive attitude towards change? The mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Change information</i> ▪ <i>Fulfillment organization-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Trust</i> ▪ <i>Perceived need for change</i> ▪ <i>Attitude towards change</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey study ▪ N = 399 ▪ Germany Netherlands England

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Ch.	Title and main variables of survey studies	Design
6	How change information influences attitudes towards change and turnover intention: the role of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment, and trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Change information</i> ▪ <i>Engagement</i> ▪ <i>Fulfillment organization-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Trust</i> ▪ <i>Attitude towards change</i> ▪ <i>Turnover intention</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey study ▪ N = 669 ▪ Netherlands
7	How change climate influences the attitude towards change: the role of type of change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Fulfillment organization-side psychological contract</i> ▪ <i>Trust</i> ▪ <i>Change history</i> ▪ <i>Type of change</i> ▪ <i>Attitude towards change</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey study ▪ N = 396 ▪ Germany ▪ Netherlands ▪ England

Chapter 2 presents a quantitative cross-sectional study among 208 employees of ten Dutch organizations. Given the lack of research on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards organizational change, this study aimed to provide first empirical evidence that a relationship between the two concepts could be expected. Following Oreg (2006), this study still adopted the term resistance to change rather than attitude towards change, to label the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational change. However, the concept was measured with Oreg's change attitude scale. It was expected that the more an employee's psychological contract was fulfilled, the less this employee would resist the organizational change. In addition, the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and resistance to change was explored. Type of change was conceptualized in line with the four-dimensional classification of McNamara (2006).

Chapter 3 presents a qualitative study among 39 HR directors, HR managers and change managers of 15 multinational organizations active in various economic and industrial sectors. Data were gathered through face-to-face interviews in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. The aim of the study was three-fold. First, the interviews needed to expose the various responses, reactions and attitudes of employees towards and during organizational changes in order to determine whether a replacement of the one-dimensional resistance to change construct by the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct would be justified. Second, the interviews needed to provide insight into the variables that influence the attitudes of employees towards organizational change. The third aim was to explore to what extent and in what way the psychological contract is related to attitude towards change. All three themes were

addressed from a managerial perspective. A grounded theory approach led to the construction of a conceptual model on the development of an employee's attitude towards change.

Chapter 4 describes a cross-sectional survey study among 197 employees of a Dutch health insurance organization. This study explored the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. It was postulated that trust mediated the relationship between the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct. Organizational commitment was expected to mediate the relationship between the fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract and the affective dimension of an attitude towards change.

Chapter 5 presents a cross-sectional survey study among 399 primarily German, Dutch and English employees. Data were gathered using a snowball sampling method. Since many organizational changes fail due to a lack of sufficient or qualitatively good information, the study's primary aim was to gain more insight into how change information is related to the attitude of employees towards change. It was hypothesized that the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract, trust and perceived need for change would mediate the relationship between change information and the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of employees' attitude towards organizational change.

Chapter 6 is devoted to a quantitative cross-sectional study among 669 employees of the Dutch division of a multinational technology services organization. The study assessed the influence of the change antecedent of change information and the pre-change antecedents of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust on the three attitude towards change dimensions. It was postulated that the pre-change variables would be directly and positively related to attitude towards change. Change information was expected to influence attitude towards change directly as well as indirectly via engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust. Furthermore, the outcome variable of turnover intention was assessed. It was expected that attitude towards change, engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust would be negatively related to an employee's turnover intention.

Chapter 7 presents the final study of this research. In this quantitative cross-sectional study among 396 employees, the objective was to explore the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between the perceived change climate and attitude towards change. The independent pre-change variables representing the perceived organizational change climate were psychological contract fulfillment (organization-side), trust and change history. Based on McNamara's (2006) type of change classification, the moderating role of unplanned versus planned change, organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change and remedial versus developmental change was assessed.

In Chapter 8 the results of the six studies are discussed and synthesized. For each of the three key issues addressed in this thesis, the main findings are discussed. Subsequently, the theoretical implications of the results, limitations of the research, recommendations for future research and implications for practitioners are all discussed, followed by a general overall conclusion. The thesis ends with a brief summary in English, a summary in Dutch and a glossary.

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2 The relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change during organizational transformations

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Abstract

Because of ongoing globalization, changing markets and political developments, the degree of organizational change has increased significantly in the last decades. Organizations value employees who are willing and able to respond positively to change. Trust and social capital, based on fulfilling mutual expectations are important determinants of successful organizational change. The present study investigates the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to organization-related change. In a sample of 208 employees in ten Dutch organizations, data were gathered using questionnaires. The results showed a significant negative relationship between fulfillment of the organization side of the psychological contract and affective resistance to change. The more the organization had fulfilled its promises in the employee's perception, the less the employee resisted the organizational change. In addition the type of organizational change significantly moderated the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. By maintaining good psychological contracts with employees, organizations can build trust, which could prevent resistance to change.

2.1 Introduction

The psychological contract has become a central concept in literature on employment relationships. While written labor contracts include all kinds of explicit monetary and non-monetary employment conditions, such as wage, required hours and holiday entitlement, the psychological contract focuses on implicit and largely unspoken promises between an employer and an employee (Levinson et al., 1962; Anderson & Schalk, 1998). The basis for these mutual promises, which can be considered as social exchanges (Taylor & Tekleab, 2004) between an employer and an employee, is trust (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002). 'Social exchange requires trusting others to discharge their obligations' (Blau, 1964: 94). Because of reasons within or beyond the control of the employer and the employee, promises may not always be fulfilled. Zhao et al. (2007: 669) write that, 'when the other party fails to fulfill its promises, the focal person's immediate response is mistrust, which will further produce negative attitudes and behaviors'. Indeed a vast amount of literature shows that fulfillment of the psychological contract has consequences for organizational outcomes like trust in the organization, employee satisfaction, job performance and turnover (Robinson, 1996; Turnley & Feldman, 1999a; Turnley et al., 2003; Ho & Levesque, 2005). However, the influence of fulfillment of the psychological contract on resistance to organizational changes, trust (as 'one's expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests', Morrison & Robinson, 1997) and social capital (as 'the value individuals access via social networks', Ho, Rousseau, & Levesque, 2006) has hardly been investigated (e.g. Rousseau, 2003). The dynamics of organizational changes are a challenge for organizations, employees and change managers. Because of ongoing globalization, fast-changing markets and economic developments, the importance for organizations of adapting to these changes has increased significantly in the last decades

(Robinson, 1996; Piderit, 2000). However, since these organizational changes are not necessarily beneficial for employees, resistance to change may occur. It has been shown that resistance to change is ‘significantly associated with employees’ job-satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to leave the organization’ (Oreg, 2006: 73), which are all important indicators of the success of organizational change.

Recently researchers have started to conceptualize resistance to change as a multidimensional attitude (Piderit, 2000; George & Jones, 2001; Oreg, 2006), which comprises affective, and behavioral and cognitive components. These studies started to ‘explore concepts that are related to resistance to change from an individual difference perspective’ (Oreg, 2003: 680). The fulfillment of the psychological contract is important in this respect because it has effects on affective, behavioral and cognitive attitudes (e.g. Zhao et al., 2007), which are similar to the components central in the multidimensional conceptualization of resistance to change. Furthermore, ‘as layoffs and reorganizations continue to occur and as the current employment relationship continues to undergo a major transformation, the importance of understanding psychological contract violations will remain an important issue for researchers and practitioners alike’ (Turnley & Feldman, 2000: 40). Trust and social capital come into play when, for example, the chance of a violation of the psychological contract is great, as during an organizational change (Freese, 2007). In that case, the risk that a psychological contract violation will actually occur can be minimized when the organization knows and respects the psychological contracts of its employees (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

Every organizational change is different. One change may, for example, be planned and intended to gradually affect the entire organization, while another change may be unplanned and affect only a small part of the organization (McNamara, 2006). The characteristics of the change and change process affect the way employees react in terms of resistance to change. A change that is built on trust and keeps social capital intact is less likely to lead to strong effects in the event obligations are not met. Therefore we posit that the relationship between the fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change is moderated by the characteristics of the organizational change.

The present study aims to extend empirical research on resistance to change as a multidimensional construct and to further explore the antecedents of resistance to change from the perspective of individual difference. Preventing resistance to change in an organization is of practical relevance because it determines to a large extent the successfulness of organizational change. Modern industrial societies value persons who are willing and able to respond positively to change (Oreg, 2003). According to Freese (2007: 13), however, there is ‘a gap between what employers think that employees find important in working life and what employees expect to receive from their organization’. Furthermore she states that, ‘as organizations are not aware of the content of the psychological contract, they cannot predict how the changes affect the psychological contract and whether some crucial aspects of the psychological contract are violated’ (Freese, 2007: 14). Because of the major implications resistance to change as the result of an unfulfilled psychological contract may have for trust, social capital, and the success of an organizational change, we focus on these issues.

2.2 The psychological contract and resistance to change

2.2.1 *Psychological contract theory*

The term psychological contract was first used in the 1960s by Argyris (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Guest, 2004). Levinson et al. (1962) formulated the first definition of the concept, which they defined as the product of mutual expectations. According to these authors, the two main characteristics of psychological contracts are that they are largely implicit and unspoken, and that they frequently reflect the relationship between a person and a company. Nowadays the definitions of the psychological contract are not very different from these first conceptions. Although there are minor variations in the definitions used (Schein, 1978; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995), Rousseau's (1989) is the most broadly accepted. She defines the psychological contract as an individual's beliefs in mutual obligations between that person and another party. Most research on psychological contracts focuses on obligations in the context of the employment relationship (Rousseau, 2000). The psychological contract is conceptualized as the individual perception of mutual obligations between an employer and an employee in the context of this relationship. These obligations are the result of promises the employer and employee have made to each other during their relationship, at least in the employee's perception (Rousseau, 1989). Although the employer may have never made a certain promise explicitly, it is quite possible that the employee perceived it as an obligation as a result of oral discussions, organizational practices or policies, non-verbal communication and the like (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

A typical feature of promises is that they can be fulfilled or not. Since the psychological contract is based on promises (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), a psychological contract can also be fulfilled or not. When relating this to the employer–employee relationship, several authors advance that a psychological contract is breached when it is not or not completely fulfilled (e.g. Kickul, Lester & Belgio, 2004; Lester, Kickul & Bergman, 2007). In the present article, we use the description of breach from Turnley et al. (2003: 190). These authors state that a 'breach of the psychological contract occurs when employees perceive a discrepancy between what they were promised and what they actually receive'. Since this definition uses the word 'discrepancy', it indicates that it is also possible that an employee receives more than what was initially promised or agreed upon, for example an unexpected financial bonus or a raise in payment. Turnley et al. write that, if such a positive imbalance occurs, there is an over-fulfillment of the psychological contract. On the other hand, when a negative imbalance occurs, there is an under-fulfillment of the psychological contract, instead of a breach, as Lester et al. would call it. According to Turnley & Feldman (1999b: 374), many previous studies 'ignored the fact that psychological contracts can be over-fulfilled as well as under-fulfilled'. Recent studies have conceptualized and operationalized fulfillment of the psychological contract in terms of the extent to which a psychological contract

is fulfilled (Turnley et al., 2003; Ho, 2005; Lester et al., 2007). The fulfillment of the psychological contract can thus be conceptualized as an individual perception.

The fulfillment of the psychological contract can have major implications for the performance and behavior of employees (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Ho & Levesque, 2005). Most studies on psychological contract fulfillment apply Blau's (1964) social-exchange theory to explain these differences in outcomes (e.g. Turnley et al., 2003; Zhao et al., 2007). Social exchange theory assumes a continuous evaluation of the extent to which the other party fulfills its obligations to the exchange in order to keep the social exchanges in balance (Lester, Kickul & Bergmann, 2007). Reciprocity therefore plays an important role: employees will try to restore the imbalances in social exchanges. Under-fulfillment of the psychological contract can lead to negative outcomes, such as feelings of anger and anxiety, a decrease in trust and job satisfaction, an increased intention to quit and a decrease in organizational citizenship behavior (Robinson, 1996; Turnley et al., 2003; Ho & Levesque, 2005; Lester, Kickul & Bergmann, 2007). Over-fulfillment, in turn, was found to be positively related to employees' loyalty, contribution to the firm and other positive outcomes (Turnley et al., 2003). Thus, by maintaining good and balanced psychological contracts with their employees, organizations may prevent negative affective, behavioral and cognitive outcomes.

2.2.2 *Resistance to change*

For many years researchers have been studying employees' resistance to organizational changes. Many studies were based on the assumption that employees would try to prevent changes from taking place. Therefore many authors conceptualized resistance to change in terms of restraining forces in the realm of behavior (Piderit, 2000).

Recently researchers have adopted a more positive perspective, perceiving resistance to change as a natural phenomenon that can be beneficial for an organization. Resistance may, for example, provide constructive feedback on an organizational change. In addition it is concluded that resistance does not automatically occur when a change is taking place, but that it is a 'natural consequence of other problems' (Piderit, 2000; Giangreco, 2002). Resistance to change is no longer seen as purely behavioral, and the importance of cognitive and affective components in the expressions of employees when confronted with a change in their organization is emphasized (e.g. Rousseau, 2003). As a result of change, employees can start (re)thinking whether the change is beneficial for them, and may feel disappointed when it is not. Such respectively cognitive and affective elements are important determinants of work related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, the intention to quit and commitment to an organization (Oreg, 2006).

Piderit (2000) conceptualizes resistance to change as a multifaceted construct. She wanted to integrate affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change because in her view, when used separately, they would provide an incomplete conceptualization of resistance to change. The finding that employees' feelings, behaviors and thoughts about a change are not necessarily in line with each other (Piderit, 2000) confirms this reasoning.

Following Piderit, resistance to change is defined here as a three-dimensional attitude towards change, comprising affective, behavioral and cognitive components. The first dimension of the conceptualization, the affective dimension, has to do with the positive or negative feelings of employees when confronted with a change. These feelings comprise moods and emotions like anger, relief and anxiety (Piderit, 2000). The more negative these feelings are, the higher the affective resistance will be. The second dimension is the behavioral dimension. In accordance with Oreg (2006: 76), this behavioral component involves 'actions or intentions to act in response to the change'. A person may think about complaining to management, or convincing colleagues that the change is a good or a bad development. Negative behavior such as complaining can be described as behavioral resistance. The third dimension of the conceptualization is the cognitive dimension. This component of Piderit's construct concerns employees' thoughts about the change (Piderit, 2000). The employees ask themselves how necessary or beneficial the change is for them. Or in other words, the cognitive dimension concerns the positive or negative beliefs of employees as a result of a mental evaluation of the change (Eagly et al., 1999). And the more negative these beliefs are, the higher the cognitive resistance is.

2.2.3 The relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change

A negative relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change can be expected, since under-fulfillment of the psychological contract leads to negative affective, behavioral and cognitive outcomes, and over-fulfillment leads to positive outcomes (Robinson, 1996; Turnley et al., 2003). Therefore the main hypothesis tested in our research is:

Hypothesis 1: The more the psychological contract of an employee is fulfilled, the less this employee will resist change.

2.2.4 Type of change

Employees can be confronted with different kinds of changes in an organization, which have different relations with trust and social capital. For example trust may be violated or increased when a new supervisor is appointed. In the same vein, changes in HR policies or a large merger of the organization with another one can have positive or negative consequences for trust and social capital. Employees are likely to react differently to different types of changes (Freese, 2007). Change is a very broad concept and, although most authors agree that it is a multidimensional concept, definitions and dimensions of change are manifold (Smith, Evans & Westerbeek, 2005). A major distinction in this respect is change as something that can be planned versus change as something that occurs naturally. Changes can also be implemented radically or take place in a more incremental way in reaction to developments in the environment, as the contingency theory assumes (Hage, 1999). In addition, whether the change is planned or not, the goal of the change may be to remedy a particular situation or to further develop a process or a structure in an

organization, which consequently can influence the entire organization or merely a small part (McNamara, 2006). Thus different types of changes can occur, which have different relations to trust and social capital.

Since one of the aims of our study was to examine the role of the context of trust and social capital on the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance, the relationship is examined in different change processes. We distinguish four dimensions of organizational change commonly found in change literature in order to cover a broad variety of organizational changes. The four-dimensional categorization used here is based on McNamara (2006), who integrates previous research on organizational changes.

The first dimension McNamara discerns is organization-wide versus subsystem change. Organization-wide changes impact the entire organization. Examples are large restructuring processes, such as a major downsizing. Downsizing is an example of a planned change implemented by management. However, organization-wide changes can also be the consequence of a changing market or a change in the political environment. An example of a subsystem change, on the other hand, is the restructuring of a department or the removal of a particular product from the production process (McNamara, 2006).

McNamara's second dimension is transformational versus incremental change. Transformational changes can have a big impact on the structure and the culture of an organization. He gives the example of a change in the hierarchical structure of an organization from a traditional top-down to a bottom-up structure with a large number of employees and team autonomy at the bottom of the organization. An incremental change is a more stepwise and continuous form of change, for example the ongoing adjustments in a particular ICT-based knowledge-management system.

Remedial versus developmental change is the third type of change dimension we will use in this study. Remedial change aims at curing a particular and often urgent situation or problem. The goal may be for example to reduce turnover. In the end it is easy to make up the balance and determine the successfulness of such a change because the problem is solved or not. A developmental change, on the other hand, is intended to further develop a successful situation (McNamara, 2006). Such changes could therefore be described as more general and vague.

The last dimension of McNamara's conceptualization is unplanned versus planned change. Unplanned changes are often the result of a suddenly occurring situation, as when a company scandal is made public or when the CEO is suddenly fired. An unplanned change has a disorganized character. In contrast to an unplanned change, a planned change occurs when 'leaders in the organization recognize the need for a major change and proactively organize a plan to accomplish it' (2006: 175). However, McNamara notes that such a planned change does not necessarily occur in an organized way.

Incremental changes as well as developmental changes aim at increasing social capital and trust. Organization-wide changes can be planned as well as unplanned. The four dimensions cover a wide variety of changes, and it is still unclear what kind of consequences these changes may have for employees. Recently Freese (2007) noted that it is important to identify the types of changes individual employees have undergone and to focus on the impact changes have on employees. Freese controlled for type of change in terms of the impact that the change had on

the employee's day-to-day life and on his or her mental situation. To test whether or not the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change is different for different organizational changes, the second hypothesis of our study is:

Hypothesis 2: Type of change moderates the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change.

2.3 Method

2.3.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 208 employees in 10 Dutch organizations. The average age was 44.58 (s.d. 10.18) and 40% of the participants were female. A large majority of the respondents were engaged or married, and the highest level of education attained was high secondary or tertiary education (for almost 80% of the respondents). When considering work-related characteristics, approximately a quarter of the sample consisted of skilled and unskilled blue-collar workers, almost half of the participating employees performed white-collar work, and about a quarter had an upper white-collar or management function in their organization. Most of the participants had a permanent contract with an average of 32.34 (s.d. = 7.9) contract hours a week. On average the respondents had worked 12.48 (s.d. = 10.2) years for their current organization, had occupied 2.09 (s.d. = 1.6) different positions and had experienced 2.21 (s.d. = 2.0) organizational changes in that particular organization. We tried to include employees of organizations from a variety of industrial or economic sectors. The final sample included employees of a local governmental organization (38.0%), a funeral company (4.3%), a construction company (3.4%), a production company (3.4%), a primary school (3.8%), a hospital (5.3%), a utility company (29.3%), a general practitioners' group practice (1.9%), a secondary school (6.3%) and a healthcare organization (4.3%).

2.3.2 Procedure

Data were gathered with questionnaires. Initially 324 questionnaires were handed out to the contact persons within the organizations that agreed to participate in the study. These contact persons, mostly HR managers, distributed the questionnaires among the employees. In all the participating organizations, respondents were selected on a convenience non-probability basis. After three weeks, 208 filled-in questionnaires were returned, which amounted to a response rate of 64.2%.

2.3.3 Measures

Fulfillment of the psychological contract. The items designed to measure fulfillment of the psychological contract were derived from the Psycones (2006) project. To measure the fulfillment of the organization-side¹ of the psychological contract, the respondents were presented with fifteen promises that their organization might have made to them – for example: ‘Has your organization promised or committed itself to allow you to participate in decisionmaking?’² If, in the perception of the respondents, no such promise had been made they could answer 0 (‘No’). But if they felt the particular promise had indeed been made, they needed to indicate the extent to which they felt their organization had fulfilled this promise. In contrast to the original Psycones scale, this study included the possibility of over-fulfillment among the alternatives and used a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (‘Yes, but fulfilled much less than promised’) to 5 (‘Yes, but fulfilled much more than promised’). The reliability analysis showed a corrected item–total correlation above .3 for all fifteen items. The Cronbach’s alpha of the full scale was .91.

The fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract was measured in a comparable way. For seventeen promises that employees might make to their organization, the respondents were asked if they promised or committed themselves to the particular promise – for example: ‘Have you promised or committed yourself to be a good team player?’ The possible answers were the same as for the organization promises. All of the seventeen items showed a corrected item–total correlation between .533 and .751. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .94.

Because of the subdivision of the psychological contract into an organizational and an employee-side, two variables, which together represented fulfillment of the psychological contract, were included in the statistical analyses. For each scale, the average fulfillment score was computed for the promises that were made according to the respondent.

Resistance to change. According to Oreg (2006), no prior research used a multidimensional operationalization of resistance to change. For that reason Oreg designed three subscales to measure the affective, behavioral and cognitive component of resistance to change. These subscales were used in the present study. Each of the three subscales comprised five items that described an affective, behavioral or cognitive response to the organizational change. The fifteen items needed to be answered on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (‘Totally disagree’) to 5 (‘Totally agree’). With positively formulated items being coded in reverse, higher scores indicated a higher resistance to change.

When asking questions about the fulfillment of the psychological contract, the current situation of the contract is assessed. This may differ from the employee’s contract as he or she perceived it to be years ago. In order to link current fulfillment of the psychological contract to current resistance to change, Oreg’s (2006) items, which were originally formulated in the past tense, were changed to the present. This resulted in items like ‘I am afraid of the change’ and ‘I complain about the change to my colleagues’.³ Furthermore the respondents were urged, when filling in the questions, to do this with respect to the most important organizational change in

their current organization – either those taking place at the time or about to take place in the near future.

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess the three-dimensional composition of the resistance-to-change construct on the fifteen items (five for the affective component, five for the behavioral component and five for the cognitive component). Analyses with AMOS-7, on a model in which the three latent factors were assumed to be correlated (as well as error terms between the observed variables), showed a good fit with the empirical data (Chi square = 6.72, d.f. = 12, $p = .88$; RMR = .020, GFI = .996, AGFI = .955). This confirms the structure of the three dimensions of resistance to change. Cronbach's alphas for the affective, behavioral and cognitive subscale were high, with scores of .86, .85 and .77 respectively.

Type of change. To measure the type of the organizational change, six variables were included. The first four variables corresponded to the four types-of-change dimensions as conceptualized by McNamara (2006), namely: organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change, remedial versus developmental change and unplanned versus planned changes. For each dimension respondents were asked to indicate the components that described the change in the best way (categorical, nominal). Based on the work of Freese (2007), two employee-oriented types of change variables were included: 'Change influence on daily life' and 'Mental preoccupation with the change'. The respondents were asked how much they were affected by the change in daily life and to what extent they were mentally preoccupied with the change. These two variables were assessed on a categorical five-point scale, ranging from 1 ('Very little') to 5 ('Very much'), and were included in the analyses as ordinal variables.

Control variables. Several demographic, work-related, psychological contract-related and change-related variables were included in the analyses. First, the relationship was controlled for gender, age, education and family situation. With the exception of age, which was measured on a continuous scale, these variables were measured with categorical questions. Based on the Dutch educational system, the variable 'Education' was measured on a categorical seven-point scale ranging from 1 ('No education completed') to 7 ('University'). 'Family situation' was categorized into 1 (Single), 2 (Boyfriend/girlfriend) and 3 (Engaged/married). 'Gender' and 'Family situation' were included in the regression analyses as nominal variables, 'Education' as an ordinal variable, and 'Age' as a ratio variable.

Furthermore the relationship was controlled for the work-related variables 'Job level' and 'Contract type'. Job level (categorical, ordinal) was categorized into: (1) 'Unskilled blue-collar worker', (2) 'Skilled blue-collar worker or foremen', (3) 'Lower-level white-collar worker', (4) 'Intermediate white-collar worker or supervisor of white-collar workers', (5) 'Upper white-collar worker, middle management/executive staff' and (6) 'Management or director'. Contract type (categorical, nominal) comprised the categories: (1) 'Permanent contract', (2) 'Fixed-term contract', (3) 'Temporary contract' and (4) 'Other, namely...'. Six other work-related control variables were included in the analyses. They were: 'Contract hours', 'Years within organization', 'Functions within organization', 'Changes within organization', 'Functions total working career' and 'Changes total working

career (continuous, ratio)'. Each of these six variables indicated a certain number of contract hours, functions, years or changes.

Two psychological contract-related control variables were 'Amount of promises made by the organization' and 'Amount of promises made by the employee (continuous, ratio)'. For the organization promises and the employee promises respectively of the psychological contract scale, these two variables represented the number of items for which the respondents indicated that a particular promise had been made.

Finally, two change-related control variables were included in the regression analyses: 'Sort of change' and 'Change status (categorical, nominal)'. Sort of change was categorized into: (1) 'Change in function', (2) 'Change in tasks or increase or decrease of existing tasks within the same function', (3) 'Modification of the contract', (4) 'Change in team composition', (5) 'New supervisor', (6) 'Modification of personnel policy', (7) 'Modification to structure/strategy of the organization' and (8) 'Other, namely...'. With regard to Change status, the respondents were asked to indicate whether (1) the change was taking place at the moment or (2) the change would take place in the near future.

2.3.4 Statistical analyses

In order to test the first hypothesis, multiple linear regression analyses were carried out for each of the three resistance-to-change variables as dependent variables. Each regression analysis was conducted with the enter method and pairwise exclusion of missing values. Because the multicollinearity statistics showed no Tolerance values below .1 or VIF values above 10, all of the psychological-contract, resistance-to-change, type-of-change, demographic and work-related variables were included in the regression analyses. In addition, because of the large number of control variables compared to the number of respondents, we repeated the regression analyses, including only the control variables that showed significant results in the first analysis together with the two fulfillment variables.

The second hypothesis was tested with three univariate analyses of variance, one for each of the three resistance-to-change variables, which were included as dependent variables. The four nominal variables that represented the type-of-change dimensions as conceptualized by McNamara (2006) were included as fixed variables, and the two type-of-change variables based on the work of Freese (2007), together with the two mean fulfillment variables were included in the analyses as covariates. The model included the twelve interaction effects of the six type-of-change variables with the fulfillment of the organization promises as well as with the employee promises.

2.4 Results

The descriptive statistics, as reported in Table 1, show that the average fulfillment of organization promises was 2.91 (s.d. = .43), which is below the

'neutral' score of 3. The average fulfillment score of employee promises was 3.14 (s.d. = .34), which is above this score. A Paired Samples t-test of the mean fulfillment scores showed that the two means significantly differed from each other ($p < .001$). However, it should be noted that in general employees tend to be more positive about the fulfillment of their own promises than about the fulfillment by the organization (Schalk & Roe, 2007). With regard to resistance to change, the mean scores were 2.44 (s.d. = .75), 2.05 (s.d. = .71) and 2.56 (s.d. = .67) for, respectively, the affective, behavioral and cognitive components of the attitude towards change.

The correlations included in Table 2 are in line with what could be expected. While most correlations are between $-.20$ and $.20$, the correlations among the three resistance-to-change variables (.74, .76 and .67) are relatively high, because these three variables are subdimensions of the same construct. As indicated earlier, the multicollinearity statistics showed no Tolerance values below .1 or VIF values above 10, which indicates that the variables were not correlated too high.

2.4.1 Regression analyses

The first regression analyses assessed whether fulfillment of the psychological contract was significantly related to affective resistance to change. The first analysis, in which all the independent variables were included, showed five variables that were significantly related to affective resistance: 'Job level', 'Change in tasks', 'Modification in structure/strategy organization', 'Mental preoccupation with the change' and the amount of promises for the organization-side of the psychological contract. These variables, together with the two fulfillment variables, were included in a second regression analysis. This model accounted for 18.4% of the variance in affective resistance to change ($R^2 = .184$; $F(5.814)$, $p < .01$). The results of this analysis are in Table 3.

'Job level' showed a negative relationship with affective resistance ($\beta = -.228$, $p < .01$). Thus the higher the hierarchical position in an organization, the lower the affective resistance of the employee. Significant effects were found for two of the variables that represented 'Sort of change'. Affective resistance was higher for employees who were undergoing or about to undergo a change in tasks in their current position ($\beta = .208$, $p < .01$) and for employees whose organization was involved in a change of the structure or strategy ($\beta = .254$, $p < .01$).

The fulfillment of the organization-side ($\beta = -.140$, $p < .05$) of the psychological contract showed a significant negative relationship with affective resistance. Thus the higher the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract, the lower the affective resistance of the employee.

In the next regression analyses, the second resistance-to-change dimension, behavioral resistance, was included as the dependent variable. After conducting the first regression analysis, three variables turned out to be significantly related to behavioral resistance: 'Job level', 'Mental preoccupation with the change', and 'Type of change': unplanned versus planned change. The model of the second regression analysis, which included these three variables together with the two fulfillment variables, explained 16% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .160$; $F(6.939)$, $p < .01$). The results are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 1
Variable statistics

Variable	%	Mean	s.d.
Control variables			
Gender			
Male	60.0		
Female	40.0		
Age		44.58	10.18
Education			
Primary	3.9		
Low secondary	18.9		
High secondary	44.1		
Tertiary	33.0		
Family situation			
Single	13.2		
Boyfriend / girlfriend	13.8		
Engaged / married	73.0		
Job level			
Unskilled blue-collar worker	3.5		
Skilled blue-collar worker or foremen	21.6		
Lower-level white-collar worker	18.1		
Intermediate white-collar worker or supervisor of white-collar workers	29.1		
Upper white-collar worker, middle management/ executive staff	23.6		
Management or director	4.0		
Contract type			
Permanent contract	82.6		
Temporary contract	7.7		
Agency contract	2.9		
Other, namely...	6.8		
Contract hours		32.43	7.93
Years within organization		12.48	10.18
Functions within organization		2.09	1.58
Changes within organization		2.21	2.04
Functions total working career		2.66	4.34
Changes total working career		3.81	2.94
Sort of change			
Change in function	6.6		
Change in tasks or increase or decrease of existing tasks within the same function	17.7		
Modification of the contract	7.1		

(Continued)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Variable	%	Mean	s.d.
Change in team composition	10.1		
New supervisor	18.2		
Modification in the personnel policy	4.5		
Modification in the structure/strategy of the organization	30.8		
Other, namely...	5.1		
Change status			
Is currently taking place	63.3		
Still needs to start	36.7		
Change influence on daily life		2.64	1.01
Mental preoccupation with the change		2.60	0.96
Type of change dimension 1			
Organization-wide change	45.2		
Subsystem change	54.8		
Type of change dimension 2			
Transformational change	32.1		
Incremental change	67.9		
Type of change dimension 3			
Remedial change	28.1		
Developmental change	71.9		
Type of change dimension 4			
Unplanned change	13.1		
Planned change	86.9		
Amount promises organization		10.45	4.37
Amount promises employee		12.86	4.93
Independent variables			
Fulfillment organization-side PC		2.91	0.43
Fulfillment employee-side PC		3.14	0.34
Dependent variables			
Affective resistance		2.44	0.75
Behavioral resistance		2.05	0.71
Cognitive resistance		2.56	0.67

Lower 'Job levels' ($\beta = -.281$, $p < .01$) and higher 'Mental preoccupation with the change' ($\beta = .224$, $p < .01$) were related to behavioral resistance. Furthermore, planned changes resulted in less behavioral resistance in comparison to unplanned changes ($\beta = -.167$, $p < .05$). No significant relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and behavioral resistance was found.

TABLE 2
Correlations dependent, independent and type of change variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Affective resistance	1													
Behavioral resistance	.736**	1												
Cognitive resistance	.755**	.670**	1											
Fulfillment	-.186	-.118*	-.148*	1										
organization-side PC					1									
Fulfillment	-.118	-.098	-.069	.193**	1									
employee-side PC						1								
Organization-wide vs	-.019	.009	.001	-.132*	-.035	1								
subsystem change							1							
Transformational vs	-.027	-.060	-.114	.112	.057	-.036	1							
incremental change								1						
Remedial vs	-.056	-.038	-.114	.025	.104	-.215**	.143*	1						
developmental change									1					
Unplanned vs	-.144*	-.210**	-.154*	.166*	-.013	-.173**	.119	.258**	1					
planned change										1				
Job level	-.203**	-.263**	-.142*	.039	.057	-.176**	-.066	.056	.113	1				
Change in tasks	.182**	.104	.188**	-.114	.050	.043	.005	.141*	-.092	-.062	1			
Modification in												1		
structure/strategy	.157*	.068	.091	-.010	.010	-.418**	.028	.158*	.134*	.109	-.309**	1		
organization													1	
Mental preoccupation	.111	.152*	.105	-.039	.179**	.035	-.200**	.197**	-.021	.203**	.250**	-.066	1	
with the change														1
Amount promises	.056	.075	-.004	.211**	.120*	.074	.084	.029	-.039	-.042	-.041	.003	.086	1
organization														

Note. *Significant at the .05 level (one-tailed); **significant at the .01 level (one-tailed).

TABLE 3
Linear regression analysis: Affective resistance

Variables and Statistics	β
Control variables	
Job level	-.228**
Change in tasks	.208**
Modification in structure/strategy organization	.254**
Mental preoccupation with the change	.132
Amount promises organization	.087
Fulfillment of psychological contract variables	
Fulfillment organization-side PC	-.140*
Fulfillment employee-side PC	-.125
Model statistics	
R ²	.184
F for model	5.814**

Note. Dependent variable: Affective resistance.

*Significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

TABLE 4
Linear regression analysis: Behavioral resistance

Variables and Statistics	B
Control variables	
Job level	-.281**
Mental preoccupation with the change	.224**
Unplanned vs planned change	-.167*
Fulfillment of psychological contract variables	
Fulfillment organization-side PC	-.049
Fulfillment employee-side PC	-.115
Model statistics	
R ²	.160
F for model	6.939**

Note. Dependent variable: Behavioral resistance.

*Significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

The final regression analyses assessed whether the fulfillment of the psychological contract was related to the third resistance-to-change component, cognitive resistance. In the first analysis, 'Change in tasks', 'Modification in structure/strategy organization', 'Mental preoccupation with the change' and 'Remedial versus developmental change' showed significant results and were therefore included in the second regression analysis together with the two fulfillment variables. More than 11% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by this model ($R^2 = .116$; $F(3,936)$, $p < .01$). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.

Two variables representing ‘Sort of change’ were significantly related to cognitive resistance. Cognitive resistance differed for employees who were undergoing or facing an alteration of the tasks concerned within their current function ($\beta = .244$, $p < .01$) and for employees who were involved in a change of the organization’s structure or strategy ($\beta = .204$, $p < .01$). The third type-of-change dimension, ‘Remedial versus developmental change’, showed a significantly negative result ($\beta = -.192$, $p < .05$), which indicates that developmental changes result in less cognitive resistance than remedial changes. No significant relationship was found between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change.

TABLE 5
Linear regression analysis: Cognitive resistance

Variables and Statistics	β
Control variables	
Change in tasks	.244**
Modification in structure/strategy organization	.204**
Mental preoccupation with the change	.103
Remedial vs developmental change	-.192*
Fulfillment of psychological contract variables	
Fulfillment organization-side PC	-.097
Fulfillment employee-side PC	-.063
Model statistics	
R ²	.116
F for model	3.936**

Note. Dependent variable: Cognitive resistance.

*Significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

Hypothesis 1 assumed a negative relationship between the fulfillment of psychological contract and resistance to change. The results of the regression analyses confirm this hypothesis – only, however, for affective resistance to organizational change. No relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and behavioral or cognitive resistance was found.

2.4.2 *Univariate analyses of variance*

To examine whether the type of change moderates the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and affective, behavioral and cognitive resistance to change, three univariate analyses of variances were carried out (see Tables 6, 7 and 8). In the following section of this article, we discuss the results of the analyses per type-of-change dimension. In addition we visualized the highly significant ($p < .01$) interaction effects in Figures 1 to 4.

Organization-wide versus subsystem change

The relationship between fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract and behavioral resistance differed for organization-wide and subsystem changes, $F(4,107)$, $p < .05$. In the event of an organization-wide change, fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract was negatively related to behavioral resistance. Employees with a low fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract had an average behavioral resistance score of 2.95, while employees that reported a high fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract scored an average behavioral resistance of 1.99. In the event of subsystem changes, the relationship was slightly positive with average behavioral resistance scores of 1.81 and 2.11 for respectively a low and a high fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract.

Transformational versus incremental change

For all three resistance-to-change components, the second type-of-change dimension moderated the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. All these relationships were negative.

First, transformational versus incremental change significantly moderated the relationship between the organization-side, $F(7.046)$, $p < .01$, as well as the employee-side, $F(7.027)$, $p < .01$, of the psychological contract and affective resistance to change. For the organization-side of the psychological contract the negative effect of psychological-contract fulfillment on affective resistance was stronger for transformational changes (low: 2.81, high: 2.21) than for incremental changes (low: 2.59, high: 2.36) (see Figure 1). For the employee-side, the negative effect was stronger for incremental changes (low: 2.73, high: 2.42), than for transformational changes (low: 2.68, high: 2.51) (see Figure 2).

Second, when considering behavioral resistance, only the relationship between the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract and behavioral resistance significantly differed for transformational and incremental changes, $F(5.225)$, $p < .05$. The negative relationship with psychological-contract fulfillment was stronger for incremental changes (low: 2.26, high: 2.02) than for transformational changes (low: 2.28, high: 2.17).

Third, the relationship between fulfillment of the organization-side, $F(6.566)$, $p < .05$, as well as the employee-side, $F(4.902)$, $p < .05$, of the psychological contract and cognitive resistance was significantly moderated by transformational versus incremental change. With regard to the organization side, psychological contract fulfillment was more strongly negatively related to cognitive resistance in case of a transformational change (low: 2.95, high: 2.44) than in case of an incremental change (low: 2.58, high: 2.48). When considering the employee side, the negative effect in the event of a transformational change was marginal (low: 2.70, high: 2.69), and also during an incremental change the effect was relatively small (low: 2.62, high: 2.51).

TABLE 6
Univariate analysis of variance: Affective resistance

Source	d.f.	F
Corrected model	20	2.538
Intercept	1	.007
Organization-wide vs subsystem change	1	1.51
Transformational vs incremental change	1	.380
Remedial vs developmental change	1	1.425
Unplanned vs planned change	1	2.983
Change influence on daily life	1	1.360
Mental preoccupation with the change	1	.092
Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.470
Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	1.454
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	2.166
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.000
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	7.046**
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	7.027**
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	6.652*
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.059
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	7.778**
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.014
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.003
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	1.469
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.142
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.034
Error	157	
Total	178	
Corrected total	177	

Note. Dependent variable: Affective resistance. $R^2 = .244$ (adjusted $R^2 = .148$).

*significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

Remedial versus development change

The third type-of-change dimension significantly moderated the relationship between fulfillment of the organization side of the psychological contract and affective resistance to change, $F(6.652)$, $p < .05$. Although the negative relationship was less strong for remedial changes (low: 2.69, high: 2.41) than for developmental changes (low: 2.67, high: 2.27), in the event of low fulfillment the difference between both resistance scores was marginal.

TABLE 7
Univariate analysis of variance: Behavioral resistance

Source	d.f.	F
Corrected model	20	3.004
Intercept	1	.926
Organization-wide vs subsystem change	1	9.276**
Transformational vs incremental change	1	2.674
Remedial vs developmental change	1	.813
Unplanned vs planned change	1	2.715
Change influence on daily life	1	1.657
Mental preoccupation with the change	1	1.154
Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	1.480
Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	1.029
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	2.482
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	4.107*
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.244
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	5.225*
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	3.118
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.005
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	1.903
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.572
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.007
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	1.905
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	2.523
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.074
Error	157	
Total	178	
Corrected total	177	

Note. Dependent variable: Behavioral resistance. $R^2 = .277$ (adjusted $R^2 = .185$).

*significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

Unplanned versus planned change

The analysis of the moderating effect of the fourth type-of-change variable, unplanned versus planned change, showed two significant effects. First of all, the relationship between fulfillment of the organization side of the psychological contract and affective resistance significantly differed for unplanned (low: 3.06, high: 2.18) and planned (low: 2.58, high: 2.31) changes, $F(7.778)$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 3).

The last significant moderating effect was found in the relationship between fulfillment of the organization side of the psychological contract and cognitive resistance, $F(6.945)$, $p < .01$. As for affective resistance, the negative relationship was stronger for unplanned changes (low: 3.11, high: 2.40) than for planned changes (low: 2.62, high: 2.48) (see Figure 4).

TABLE 8
Univariate analysis of variance: Cognitive resistance

Source	d.f.	F
Corrected model	20	2.611
Intercept	1	.135
Organization-wide vs subsystem change	1	4.609*
Transformational vs incremental change	1	.040
Remedial vs developmental change	1	.707
Unplanned vs planned change	1	6.153*
Change influence on daily life	1	.693
Mental preoccupation with the change	1	.265
Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.065
Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.233
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.760
Organization-wide vs subsystem change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	2.442
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	6.566*
Transformational vs incremental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	4.902*
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	3.388
Remedial vs developmental change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.021
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	6.945**
Unplanned vs planned change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	1.096
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.234
Change influence on daily life / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.319
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment organization-side PC	1	.281
Mental preoccupation with the change / Fulfillment employee-side PC	1	.001
Error	157	
Total	178	
Corrected total	177	

Note. Dependent variable: Cognitive resistance. $R^2 = .250$ (adjusted $R^2 = .154$).

*Significant at the 5% level (one-tailed test); **significant at the 1% level (one-tailed test).

The second hypothesis of our study concerned the moderating effect of the type of change on the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. This hypothesis was confirmed. Each of the four type-of-change variables significantly moderated at least one of the relationships between fulfillment of the psychological contract, which were subdivided into an organization side and an employee side, and resistance to change, which was subdivided into affective, behavioral and cognitive resistance. Thus the extent to which an employee resists change as a result of promises unfulfilled by the organization or by the employee differs for organization-wide and subsystem changes, transformational and incremental changes, remedial and developmental changes, and unplanned and planned changes.

FIGURE 1

Transformational versus incremental change as a moderating variable on the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract (FOPC) and affective resistance to change

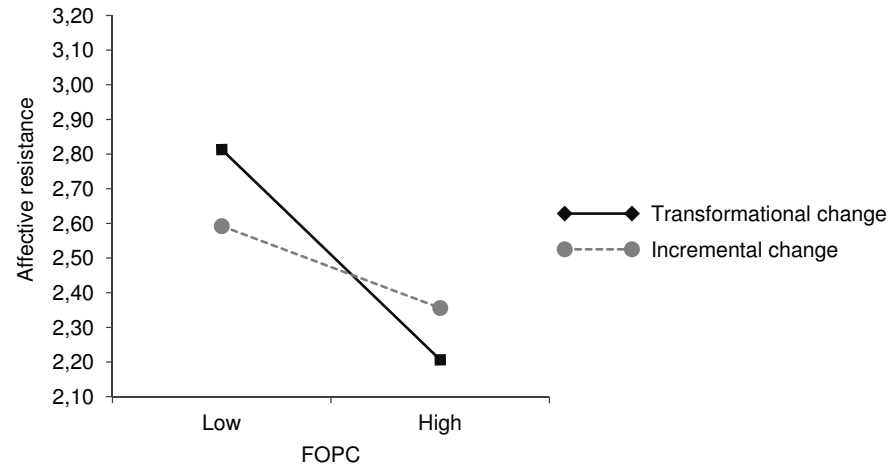


FIGURE 2

Transformational versus incremental change as a moderating variable on the relationship between the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract (FEPC) and affective resistance to change

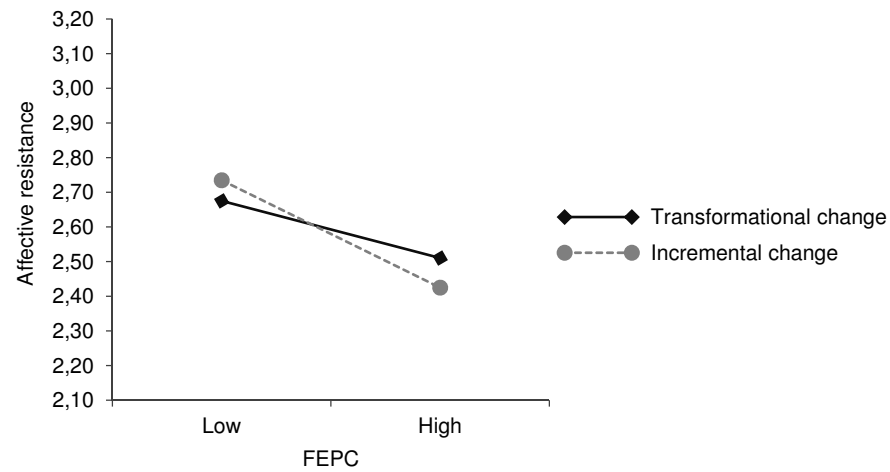


FIGURE 3

Unplanned versus planned change as a moderating variable on the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract (FOPC) and affective resistance to change

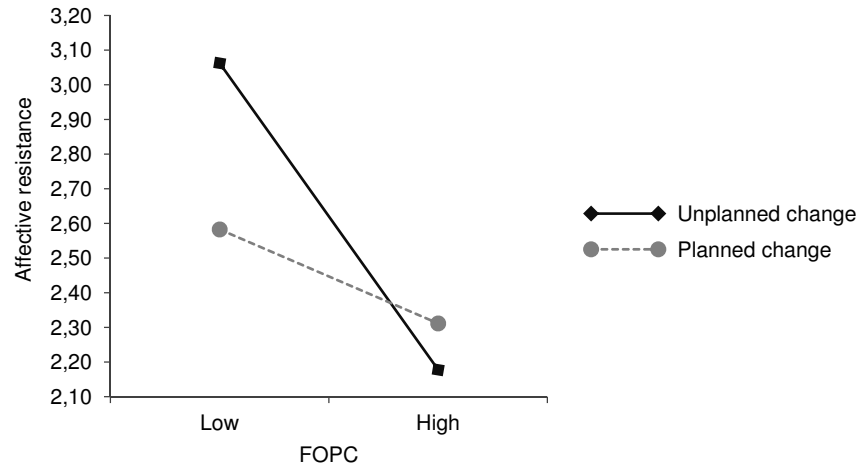
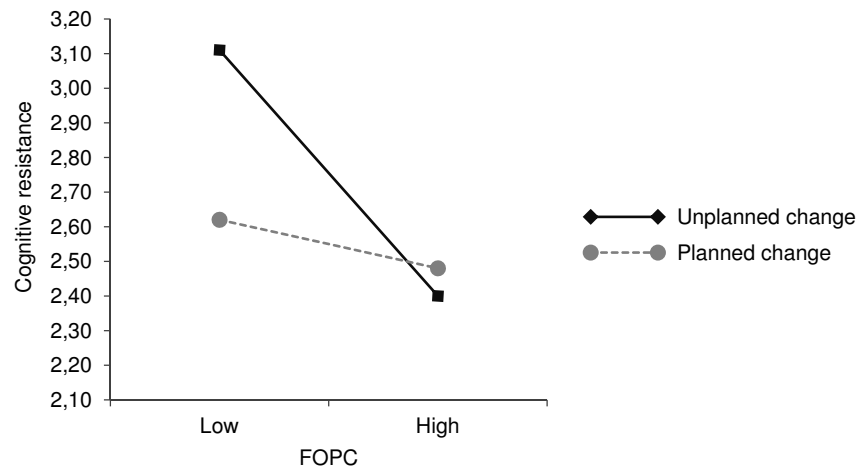


FIGURE 4

Unplanned versus planned change as a moderating variable on the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract (FOPC) and cognitive resistance to change



2.5 Discussion

The main question under discussion in the present article was: 'Is there a relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change?' The results of this study show that an employee's perception of the degree to which the organization and the employee have fulfilled their promises does influence an employee's resistance to an organizational change. Furthermore a distinction was made between affective, behavioral and cognitive resistance to change. It was argued that resistance to change should not be looked at as a compounded variable because the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of an employee are not necessarily in line with each other. The results of our study confirm this and show that fulfillment of the psychological contract is related to affective resistance to change, whereas no such relationship was found for the other two resistance-to-change components. Furthermore the average behavioral resistance score (2.05) was much lower than the affective resistance (2.44) and cognitive resistance (2.56) scores, which might imply that, when an employee feels or thinks negatively about the change, this is not always expressed.

The negative relationship between fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and affective resistance indicates that the more the organization has fulfilled its promises in the perception of the employee, the less affective resistance that employee shows towards the organizational change. No significant relationship between fulfillment of the employee side of the psychological contract and resistance to change was found.

The results of the study underline the importance for organizations of maintaining good psychological contracts with their employees, which results in mutual trust in the exchange relationship between the employee and the organization. It has been argued that under-fulfillment of the psychological contract is strongly related to a decrease in trust in the organization, which leads to a variety of negative affective, behavioral and cognitive responses. Our study empirically proves that this decrease in trust also results in higher affective resistance towards an organizational change.

The type of organizational change significantly moderated the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. Trust and social capital are important factors, which can explain the results of the moderating effects. Incremental and developmental change processes build trust. Social capital is fostered in planned and organization-wide changes. It was found consistently that negative effects of breach of the psychological contract were stronger in low-trust situations, in cases of transformational and remedial organizational changes. Effects were more negative in unplanned and subsystem changes as well. This illustrates the positive role of trust and social capital, as exemplified in the moderating effects of the type of change. Thus organizations need to be well aware of the effects of the type of the change the employee is confronted with in order to be able to properly assess the consequences of a possible under- or over-fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract as a result of the change.

The importance of a 'social capital' of well-fulfilled employee psychological contracts is especially evident in the case of organization-wide changes, where

employees who do not perceive their own obligation to be fulfilled to a large extent show much higher behavioral resistance to the change than employees who perceive their own obligations to be highly fulfilled.

Especially in cases of incremental change, trust builds gradually. In cases of transformational change, trust in the organization is put to the test to a much higher degree. The impact of low fulfillment of the psychological contract on resistance to change is therefore greater in case of transformational changes.

Developmental changes cause less resistance to change than remedial changes, regardless of the degree of fulfillment of the organization promises. This shows that it is better to prevent negative consequences than to cure them. Developmental changes build trust by improving a situation, while remedial changes intend to cure a particular situation, which presumes that there is a prior problem or undesirable situation, and that probably trust is low in that case. Remedial changes therefore need to restore trust rather than further develop it.

Another change characteristic addressed in this research was whether the change was planned or unplanned. Unplanned changes are more likely to occur in dynamic organizations than in static organizations. The importance of trust in such organizations is therefore greater because, when confronted with unplanned changes, affective and cognitive resistance to change is much higher among employees who perceive low fulfillment of organization promises than among employees who experience high fulfillment.

2.5.1 Limitations

One important limitation of this study is that the measurement of the psychological contract does not reveal the dynamics of this psychological contract in relation to a particular change. All kinds of social and work-related aspects can influence and therefore change the psychological contract and its fulfillment over time (e.g. Ho & Levesque, 2005; Lester, Kickul & Bergmann, 2007). In the present study, the psychological contract and its fulfillment were measured at one moment in time. As a consequence it remains unclear whether or not the employee had already evaluated and altered his or her psychological contract as a result of the change.

Another limitation relates to the fact that the psychological contract is a representation of the employee's perception. The study did not gather additional, more objective, information that could be compared with the perceptions of the employee. When looking at fulfillment of the organization side of the psychological contract for instance, employees may indicate that a certain promise has not been made, while the organization is putting a lot of effort into it, for example creating a safe working environment, allowing employees to participate in decision making or providing good pay for the work the employee does. A few respondents in this study indicated that the fact that something had not been promised did not necessarily mean that the organization did not 'do it'. Having such objective data to compare with the employee psychological contract might help create a more complete image of the employees' psychological contracts.

2.5.2 Recommendations

We would make several recommendations for future research. We used Oreg's (2006) scale to measure the multidimensional concept of resistance to change. Oreg was one of the first authors to develop and test such a scale. Although the scale showed high reliability scores in Oreg's study as well as in our own, the scale could be tested in more empirical studies to ensure its reliability and validity. Future research on multifaceted resistance to change might also benefit from the development of other scales, which could result in a critical reflection and possible adjustments of already existing scales.

Measuring the psychological contract with a scale that includes the possibility of over-fulfillment, as this study does, is also a quite recent introduction. Although over-fulfillment is expected to have a weaker impact on employee attitudes than under-fulfillment, because employees may be more sensitive to under-fulfillment than to over-fulfillment of the psychological contract (Robinson, 1996; Schalk & Roe, 2007), this effect needs more study.

Furthermore we recommend conducting research in the form of a longitudinal study on the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. Such research could provide more insight into developments over time during organizational change. It could be the case, for example, that unfulfilled promises in the beginning of the change process lead to high cognitive resistance to change, which results in more behavioral resistance during the implementation phase at the end of the change process.

Finally, we recommend including the perceptions of the employers, decision-makers or the management team in future research on the relationship between fulfillment of the psychological contract and resistance to change. Employers have an idea about the extent to which they have made and fulfilled promises to their employees. Differences between these employer perceptions and those of their employees may be related to resistance to change on the part of the employees. And, as this study shows, the perception of the employee does matter ...

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. In this study the psychological contract is operationalized in terms of organization and employee obligations/promises instead of employer and employee obligations/promises. Therefore, from now on, the word 'organization' is used to represent the employer side of the psychological contract.
2. Because of its cross-national character, the Psycones (2006) project used questionnaires in several languages. The respondents in this study were presented with items derived from the Dutch version of the questionnaire. But the examples of both employee and organization promises mentioned in this article are the corresponding items from the English version of the questionnaire.
3. Oreg's (2006) scale items were originally written in English, so they needed to be translated. Three MSc graduates at Tilburg University translated the English items into Dutch. Subsequently each of them translated the other two versions back into English. The Dutch translations of the items that were included in the questionnaire were those that, after the second translation, were most similar to the original scale items.

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3 What's in it for me? A managerial perspective on the influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change

Based on: Van den Heuvel, S., Schalk, R., Freese, C., & Timmerman, V. (Submitted). What's in it for me? A managerial perspective on the influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change.

Abstract

This study develops a model on how business managers perceive that an employee's psychological contract influences his or her attitude towards an organizational change. In-depth interviews with 39 human resource directors, change managers and management consultants in eight European countries provide insight into the managerial views on (1) the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees towards organizational change, (2) the pre-change and change antecedents of these responses and (3) the role of the psychological contract as a pre-change antecedent. Based on detailed grounded theory-driven analyses of the qualitative data, a model emerged that positions the individual change perception and individual answer to the 'what's in it for me?' question as central determinants of an employee's attitude towards change. Furthermore, the model distinguishes between 'influencing' variables that shape the employees' change perception, and 'overruling' variables that can potentially reverse the change perceptions. The model provides an employment relationship-centered managerial perspective on organizational change that is informative for research and practice. Based on the results, it can be argued that a strong emphasis on managing the employment relationship by fulfilling mutual obligations and by creating trust will yield more constructive responses to organizational change than focusing on managing an organizational change as an independent event. Limitations of the research are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided.

3.1 Introduction

For business leaders and change managers, knowledge of the state and content of the psychological contract of employees is very informative, especially in the context of organizational changes (Rousseau, 2003). The increasing frequency of organizational change means that "promises and deals made in good faith one day may be broken the next" (Guest, 2004, p. 543). In times of change, organizational agents need to be aware that employment relationships that are characterized by a history of psychological contract breach are likely to "require more extensive overhaul" (Rousseau, 1996, p. 50). The interpretation of an organizational change and the perception of information provided by management are shaped by a change recipient's psychological contract (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999) and general beliefs concerning the employment relationship. Although Rousseau (2003) highlighted the important role that psychological contracts play in a changing workplace, empirical research on the relationship between the psychological contract and an employee's attitude towards change is scarce.

Unlike most change recipients, managers are the ones in the driver's seat of change implementation. They are responsible for defining the desired end state, for determining the outline of the change process and for taking corrective measures during the change implementation. Moreover, they are the ones receiving employee responses to organizational change, and thus are able to judge which factors lead to these responses. Therefore, this study adopts the managerial perspective to gain

more insight into the largely unexplored relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change.

To position the psychological contract among other antecedents of an employee's attitude towards change, the present study builds on a theoretical framework based on a recently published 60-year review of change recipients' reactions to organizational changes (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). The framework distinguishes categories of pre-change antecedents "which constitute conditions that are independent of the organizational change and which existed prior to the introduction of the change" from categories of change antecedents which "involve aspects of the change itself" (p. 26). In addition, Oreg et al. (2011) categorized the reactions of employees to organizational changes in terms of affect, behavior and cognition. However, this three-dimensional view on employee responses to organizational change introduced by Piderit (2000) has thus far been adopted in only a few empirical studies (see, e.g., Oreg, 2006; Van den Heuvel & Schalk, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to build on existing conceptualizations of the psychological contract and attitude towards change to acquire more insight into the managerial perspective on how these concepts are related. The theoretical discussion of both concepts in the following sections aims to synthesize the state of affairs in research on both concepts and to reflect on the relationship between both concepts from a theoretical perspective. In the subsequent sections this relationship is empirically explored from a managerial perspective using a grounded theory approach. In these sections, the following three research questions are addressed:

1. To what extent can a three-dimensional attitude towards change conceptualization be justified according to managers?
2. Which factors influence the attitude of employees to organizational change according to managers?
3. How does the psychological contract influence the attitude of employees to organizational change according to managers?

Based on interview data acquired from 39 human resource directors, change managers and management consultants in 8 European countries and 15 multinational organizations, a conceptual model is constructed.

3.2 Attitude towards change

Researchers as well as practitioners often conceptualize responses to organizational change in terms of resistance (Agócs, 1997; Oreg, 2003; Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005; McCarthy, Puffer, May, Ledgerwood, & Stewart Jr., 2008). However, employees can also respond positively to organizational changes (Lines, 2005; Elias, 2009). The concept readiness to change (e.g. Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007) therefore served as a positive counterpart of resistance to

change for a long time. Various other concepts emerged as well, representing either positive responses to change such as openness to change, commitment to change and acceptance of change, as well as more negative ones such as cynicism about change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005; Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006; Chen & Wang, 2007). However, each of these conceptualizations is problematic, since it by definition neglects the opposite response and thus does not encompass the broad continuum of potential employee responses. A lack of resistance to change, for example, does not necessarily imply enthusiasm. Similarly, a lack of openness to change does not necessarily mean that employees actively obstruct organizational change. That is why the present study uses the all-embracing and neutral concept of attitude towards change, which does cover the broad continuum of employee responses, ranging from strongly negative to strongly positive (Piderit, 2000; Lines, 2005; Bouckennooghe, 2010).

One of the most influential models in the attitude literature is the tripartite model (Ostrom, 1969; Elizur & Guttman, 1976; Bagozzi, 1978). Piderit (2000) proposed the tripartite view on attitudes in the context of organizational change. Attitude towards change can therefore be defined as a tridimensional state composed of affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). As feelings, behaviors and thoughts about the organizational change can be ambivalent, Piderit (2000) argued that “any definition focusing on one view at the expense of the others seems incomplete” (p. 786). The affective dimension of the attitude construct concerns one’s “positive-negative emotional relationship” (Bagozzi, 1978, p. 10), or feelings regarding the change (Oreg, 2006) like anger, happiness or anxiety. In line with Eagly and Chaiken’s (1998) work, the affective component can be conceptualized as an employee’s feelings, moods and emotions with regard to an organizational change. The behavioral dimension of attitude towards change can be conceptualized as “actions or intention to act in response to the change” (Oreg, 2006, p. 76). Examples are complaining to management, persuading others of the benefits of the change or intentionally reducing one’s productivity. Finally, the cognitive dimension of attitude towards change is about thoughts and beliefs, for example about whether or not the change is necessary or beneficial for a particular employee (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006).

3.2.1 *Antecedents of attitude towards change*

In times of organizational change, business leaders and change agents are in continuous search of decisive intervention opportunities to steer employee responses to organizational change. This is especially so, given a “growing consensus about the key role that change recipients’ reactions to change have in determining the change’s potential to succeed” (Oreg et al., p. 2). Based on their review, Oreg et al. (2011) distinguished two pre-change antecedent categories. First of all, change recipients’ characteristics influence attitude towards change. Besides personality traits and demographic variables, this category included an individual’s motivational needs and coping styles. The second pre-change antecedent category concerned the internal context of the organization. The degree to which the organizational environment was supportive and management was trustworthy was found to

influence employee responses to change. Also the employees' commitment to the organization and the general atmosphere and culture in which the change took place played a role.

Next to the two pre-change antecedent categories, Oreg et al. (2011) identified three categories of antecedents that were related to a particular change, the so-called change antecedents. The first antecedent concerned the change process. The antecedents that are most frequently within this category include variables related to the participation in the planning and implementation of the change, the communication and availability of information, and the perceived procedural justice. However, also the principal support – i.e. support for the change from change agents and opinion leaders (Oreg et al., 2011) – and the perceived competence of management to implement the change were found to influence change recipients' reactions to change. The second change antecedent category was related to the perceived benefit or harm caused by the change. Antecedents within this category concerned the anticipated negative or positive outcomes of the change, the perceived job security and the perceived distributive justice, thus whether outcomes of the change are considered fair. The third change antecedent category concerned the change content, i.e. the nature or type of change, as a determinant of employees' attitude towards organizational change. However, only few studies have yet explored this antecedent category.

The psychological contract exists prior to a specific change, and is therefore different from change antecedents such as change information, principal support and procedural justice. The influence of the psychological contract on change recipients' attitude towards change has thus far hardly been subject to scrutiny. Here we consider the psychological contract as a pre-change antecedent, which according to Oreg et al.'s (2011) model can be classified as an internal context variable. In the next section, the psychological contract will be discussed as well as the theoretical reasoning behind the presumed relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change.

3.3 The psychological contract

The psychological contract has become a central framework in understanding the employment relationship and its dynamics. After early writings on the concept by Argyris (1960), Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl and Solley (1962) and Schein (1965), Rousseau made a significant contribution to the further development of the concept. She defined the psychological contract as an individual's beliefs about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, 1990). The obligations that constitute the psychological contract stem from implicit and explicit promises as perceived by the employee. The psychological contract is therefore the subjective belief of these promises. As Dabos and Rousseau (2004) noted, most psychological contract research has focused on the negative outcomes resulting from psychological contract breach, while “less attention has been paid to the positive or functional outcomes associated with agreement and psychological contract fulfillment” (p. 55). With respect to breach of

the psychological contract, the most positive scenario that can occur is that the promises are fully met. However, promises can also be fulfilled more than expected (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). In line with recent psychological contract literature (e.g. Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003; Lester, Kickul, & Bergman, 2007) this will be taken into account in this study.

Most classifications of work-related outcomes of psychological contract fulfillment point in the direction of affective and behavioral responses. Cognitive responses seem to be underrepresented. However, several outcomes of psychological contract fulfillment, like intention to quit (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), also consist of beliefs and thoughts. Even affective outcomes such as trust (Robinson, 1996) contain a cognitive component (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). In recent years, several authors have made an attempt to categorize the outcomes of psychological contract breach. Zhao et al. (2007) for example conducted a quantitative meta-analysis in which they categorized the work-related outcomes of psychological contract breach into affective reactions, work attitudes and work behavior. In their attempt to improve Kickul, Lester, and Belgio's (2004) categorization of outcomes into attitudes and behaviors, they applied affective event theory to emphasize the role that affective reactions play. They stated that psychological contract breach would result in affective reactions which would consequently contribute to the formation of attitudes and behavior. However, affective event theory's call to position the affective component of the attitude construct as an antecedent of the behavioral and cognitive component (Zhao et al., 2007) contradicts the tripartite model of attitude, which was discussed earlier. According to this widely accepted model, an attitude comprises all three elements, thus affect, behavior, and cognition (Bagozzi, 1978). Although the causality among attitude dimensions is subject of an ongoing debate (Piderit, 2000), the present study adopts the view that "variations in evaluation along the particular dimensions of an attitudinal response will cause variations in global attitude" (Piderit, 2000, p. 787). The conclusion is that the psychological contract influences attitude towards change, which comprises affective, behavioral and cognitive elements.

3.3.1 The influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change

Reviewing literature on the psychological contract in relation to organizational change reveals that the far majority of studies focus on how organizational changes affect the psychological contract (see, e.g., Freese, 2007). More specifically, research has focused on how these changes affect the psychological contract, resulting in psychological contract breach or violation. Just a few studies considered the psychological contract as a determinant of responses to organizational change, although it has been suggested that this relationship exists (see, e.g., Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). According to psychological contract theory, through social exchange and reciprocity mechanisms in the exchange relationship, an employee will seek a certain balance in the exchanges with the organization. A perceived imbalance of the exchange can, for example, lead to psychological contract breach,

less trust in the organization and organizational cynicism (Robinson, 1996; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Such distortions of the relationship between an employee and the employer will have a negative impact on the perceptions of organizational change. Pate, Martin and Staines (2000), for instance, claim that "when organizations are trying to secure important organizational changes, low trust relations and high degrees of cynicism may combine to significantly limit the degree of change that can be achieved" (p. 486). According to Pate et al., this is because "increasing levels of cynicism could become a self-fulfilling prophecy that makes subsequent changes increasingly more difficult to achieve" (p. 484). Rousseau (1998) argued with respect to the psychological contract and responses to organizational change that transactional psychological contracts would be associated with higher resistance to change, whereas relational psychological contracts would be related to change acceptance. Empirical evidence for a relationship between the psychological contract and resistance to change was found in a study of Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009) among 208 employees of 10 Dutch organizations. The results showed that fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was negatively related to affective resistance to change. Folger and Skarlicki (1999), who elaborated on how distributive, procedural and interactional justice interact to predict resistance to change, argued that "resisting organizational change is one response to a psychological contract violation" (p. 40). In sum, although there are indications that the psychological contract influences employee attitudes towards change, substantial empirical evidence is lacking with respect to both the employee's and employer's (managerial) perspective.

Our research questions refer to the managerial perspective on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change. We opted to use a grounded theory approach by means of interviewing as a first step towards a better understanding of the presumed relationships. This inductive approach aims to build theories, theoretical models or concepts by starting from data, instead of from already existing theories (Baker, 1999). The aim of this study is to construct a conceptual model.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 *Sample*

In line with the main aim of the current study to gain a broad insight into the managerial perspective on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change, we selected a diverse set of respondents. We sought to achieve diversity with respect to position (HR Director, change manager, management consultant), type of industry, and country in Western Europe. Based on these criteria, potential respondents were identified and approached through the social networks of the authors. In total, 39 experienced human resource directors, change managers and management consultants were interviewed for this study. The sample included 20 men and 19 women. Since a point of saturation in the concepts

and relationships coming forward from the interviews was reached after about 30 interviews, it was decided not to schedule additional interviews after the 39 planned interviews. The 39 respondents were located in Belgium (4), France (4), Germany (7), Italy (7), The Netherlands (2), Portugal (2), Spain (7) and Switzerland (6). All respondents were employed by multinational organizations from various industrial sectors. Participating organizations were active in banking, retail, IT, pharmacy, welding, power generation, petro chemistry, aluminum production, rail transport, cement production, telecommunication and business consultancy. A total of 15 multinational organizations, ranging in size from 900 to 90,000 employees, participated in the study.

3.4.2 Data collection

Data were collected through 39 semi-structured interviews with a duration of approximately one hour, which were conducted by a single interviewer from the end of April to June 2009. Six interviews were conducted in Dutch, while in the remaining 33 interviews the language was English. All interviews (except for one interview by telephone) were held face to face at the interviewees' office location.

A uniform interview protocol was followed for all respondents. At the beginning of each interview the respondents were assured that the interview was strictly confidential, and that quotations used in publications on the research could not be traced back to them or their organization. All the respondents gave their permission to audio-record the interview.

In line with the three research questions addressed in this study, three themes were explored during the interviews. The first theme focused on the reactions, responses or attitudes that the managers had witnessed among employees in times of organizational change. The questions asked on this theme served to obtain more insight into the extent to which all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct are present in times of organizational change, and thus whether the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct can be justified from a managerial perspective.

The second theme focused on the factors that caused these various reactions, responses or attitudes towards the change, according to the managers. For this theme, the focus was not only on factors that can be influenced by management practices and can therefore be viewed as opportunities for intervention to influence employees' responses to organizational change. Factors that are difficult or even impossible to influence by management or change agents, such as contextual factors, were considered as well.

The third theme explored the influence of psychological contract on an employee's attitude towards organizational change, according to the managers. The respondents were asked to elaborate from their professional perspective on how, if at all, the two concepts are related. In line with the definition presented earlier, the psychological contract was conceptualized as the individual perception of mutual implicit and explicit promises between an organization and an employee.

For each of the three themes, several predetermined questions were formulated. Depending on the characteristics of the organization, on the respondent and on the

answers given to the predetermined questions, additional sub-questions were asked. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to answer the interview questions based on their experiences as a professional throughout their entire career, so not only based on their experiences in their current organization or job role.

3.4.3 Data analysis

All audio-recordings of the interviews were literally transcribed and the transcriptions were thoroughly checked by the interviewer. After the transcription of the interviews, a member check was carried out by sending each respondent the transcript of the interview on which he or she could comment. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out in their prominent work on naturalistic inquiries, several methods can be used to assure the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research. They state that member checking is the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314), because it enables respondents to correct errors of fact and to provide additional information when desired. Additionally this takes away the respondent’s opportunity to disagree with the original data at a later stage of the research. Besides some minor textual remarks, no content-related feedback was received from the respondents.

In line with the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), a grounded approach was used to analyze the transcripts of the interviews, which amounted to a highly structured process to condense the large amount of raw data into categories, to develop preliminary concepts, and to eventually determine the central themes, concepts and interrelations. Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor (2003a) refer to these phases as data management, descriptive accounts and explanatory accounts, while others like Dougherty (2004) talk about open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The present study adopts the latter concepts. In the next part, each of these three phases in the coding process will be explained.

Open coding

As Strauss and Corbin (1990) noted, open coding involves “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). The primary aim of the open coding phase therefore was to make a first attempt to condense the raw data into preliminary categories, by coding respondents’ quotes and by subsequently sorting and grouping the emerged codes. To avoid being directed by already existing theoretical categorizations as much as possible, no a priori codes were created. A codebook was created in Microsoft Excel containing three initial chapters corresponding with the three research questions addressed in this study, namely ‘Chapter Y - Attitude towards change’, ‘Chapter X - Influencers of attitude towards change’, and ‘Chapter PC - Psychological contract’. For ‘Chapter Y - Attitude towards change’, three preliminary subchapters were created, namely ‘Y-A’, ‘Y-B’ and ‘Y-C’, which represented respectively the affective, behavioral and cognitive attitude towards change dimension. Every code that was created through the coding process started with the abbreviation of the category to which it was assigned, for example ‘Y-Worrying’, ‘X-Sincere communication’ or ‘PC-Realistic

promises'. While familiarizing oneself with the data during the process of transcribing the audio recordings, the first author identified 14 subthemes, which formed (together with the three preliminary attitude towards change subchapters) the initial subchapters in the codebook.

The actual coding of the raw data was performed by carefully reading the full transcripts of all 39 interviews, and simultaneously adding a representative code to illustrative, explanatory or striking words, phrases and paragraphs about events, examples, relationships and to concluding remarks that had some bearing on one of the three research questions. ATLAS.ti software was used to support the coding of the data. Each time a new code was created, the name of this code was added to the codebook. If the code fitted one of the initial subthemes of the codebook, the code was assigned to this subtheme. If not, an additional subtheme was created. The open coding process required a continuous deliberation on whether a respondent's quote required a new code, whether the quote fitted an already existing code, whether an already existing code should be renamed, or whether subthemes should be renamed. This process led to the emergence of codes such as 'X-1.19 Sincere communication' that were part of the subtheme 'X-1 Communication'. If respondents mentioned a relationship between two or more concepts, this was captured in the code as well. In such codes, the concepts as well as the direction of the relationship were captured. An example of such a relational code is 'PC-OS1.1 FF more - > more positive towards change' which represents a quote indicating that a higher fulfillment (FF) of the organization side (OS) of the psychological contract (PC) leads to a more positive response towards a change. Obviously, these relational codes were very helpful during the selective coding phase, when constructing the conceptual model.

Axial coding

As described by Strauss and Corbin (1998), in axial coding "categories are related to their subcategories to form more precise and complete explanations about phenomena" (p. 124). In this phase the *analyst method framework* as described by Spencer, Ritchie and O'Conner (2003b) was used to order, condense and synthesize the raw data underlying the codes created during the open coding phase. This matrix-based analytical method allows for a systematic analysis of qualitative data, since it results in condensed raw data which is arranged per respondent and per theme or subtheme (Spencer et al., 2003b). At the start of the axial coding phase, a matrix was created in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. All 39 respondents were allocated a separate row in the worksheet. In the first column the respondent's name, gender, country, company and position were stated to facilitate navigation and interpretation during the analytical process. Based on the key interview questions and the grouping of the codes that emerged from the open coding phase, eight subthemes were defined and assigned to the columns. For the first 'Y-Attitude towards change' theme, the columns 'Y-1 Reactions, responses or attitude of employees towards and during organizational change' and 'Y-2 Nature of the reactions, responses or attitudes towards organizational change' were created. For the second 'X-Influencers of attitude towards change' theme, the columns 'X-1 Antecedents of reactions, responses or attitudes towards organizational change' and 'X-2 Context factors influencing the reactions, responses or attitudes towards

organizational change' were created. For the third 'PC-Psychological contract' theme, the columns 'PC-1 Influence fulfillment organization-side psychological contract on attitude towards change', 'PC-2 Influence fulfillment employee-side psychological contract on attitude towards change', 'PC-3 Additional psychological contract fulfillment/breach/violation', and 'PC-4 Influence content psychological contract on attitude towards change' were created. This structure enabled the researchers throughout the entire analytical process (1) to search through (sub) themes across different respondents, (2) to search for associations between phenomena within a single respondent, and (3) to search for associations in phenomena between groups of respondents.

In order to condense the coded parts of the transcripts, each quotation was summarized into a single sentence. Because "it is essential that the analytic ideas and concepts that are developed are rooted within the data, rather than simply superimposed" (Spencer et al., 2003a, p. 210), characteristic words used by the respondents were captured in the condensed sentences without rephrasing them. Subsequently, the summarizing sentences were placed in the matrix cell that corresponded with the particular respondent and subtheme. As emphasized by Spencer et al. (2003a), it is important to be able to easily access the original data in all stages of the analytical process. Therefore, each quotation for which a summarizing sentence was created was assigned an additional numerical code, starting with 0001, followed by 0002 and so on. This numerical code was placed after its corresponding summarizing sentence in the matrix. This procedure led to the creation of 1030 additional codes. These numerical codes and their corresponding quotations were listed in a separate text-file. Besides the digital version of this quotation list and matrix, a printed quotation book and matrix book were created to facilitate the remaining analytical process.

The next step in the axial coding process was to identify substantive concepts from the condensed data in the matrix. This was a highly iterative process that started with carefully reading down columns of the matrix, in order to construe a preliminary list of central concepts per theme. Consequently, all content from the matrix, i.e. the summarizing sentences and their corresponding numerical codes, were copied into a separate text file while retaining the organization per subtheme. Then, a first attempt was made to cluster the sentences by coloring related sentences and assigning them to one of the preliminary concepts. For example, the sentence and numerical code 'Trust in leadership results in more willingness to embrace the change and believe that something good will come out of the change (0204)' was clustered under the preliminary central concept 'Trust'. During this iterative process preliminary concepts were rephrased, new concepts emerged and sentences were reassigned. This process continued until all sentences were assigned to one of the final set of 42 central concepts.

The final step in the axial coding process concerned the categorization of the concepts. It should be noted that the present study does not consider categories as standardized variables, but as groups of concepts that need to be broken down into standardized variables and require operationalization before they can be applied in quantitative research. The categories that comprised the substantive concepts thus required a higher level of abstraction. As a result, category names showed less similarity with the original terminology used by the respondents than for example

code names or the summarizing sentences in the matrix. Based on their similarities, dependency or coherence, the 42 central concepts were categorized into 21 final categories. For example, the concepts 'Participation in change' and 'Degree of imposing' were categorized into 'Involvement'. The model to be presented later consists of these 21 categories.

Selective coding

The selective coding process served to identify the core category or categories, to relate them systematically to the other categories and to validate the relationships by testing hypothetical relationships between the categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The first step in the selective coding process was to identify the central relationships between the categories per respondent. This was done by reading through the synthesized data in the matrix per row (i.e. respondent) and across columns (i.e. subthemes). The numerical codes assigned to the quotations enabled the researchers to swiftly refer back to the original quotations in the codebook and to easily identify the category to which the summarizing sentence was assigned. All relationships were plotted in a single graphic file, which resulted in the emergence of a preliminary conceptual model.

The second step was to determine the core categories. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), key criteria to classify categories as core categories are that (1) they are central in a way that all other major categories can be related to them, (2) they appear frequently in the data, preferably in most of the single cases, and (3) the reasoning behind the relations with other major categories is logical and consistent. Based on these criteria, four core categories were identified, namely 'Understanding of change', 'Perceived need for change', 'Degree personally affected' and 'Expected individual consequences'. These four categories were clustered into two categories with a higher level of abstraction. 'Understanding of change' and 'Perceived need for change' were clustered into 'Change perception', while 'Degree personally affected' and 'Expected individual consequences' were clustered into 'What's in it for me'. These two clusters form the core categories of the conceptual model.

The third step in the selective coding process was to systematically build the storyline of the conceptual model by relating all remaining categories to the selected core categories and by systematically validating these suggested relationships. The main inputs for this exercise were the graphic file depicting the preliminary conceptual model, the text file created during the axial coding phase in which all the summarizing sentences were assigned to the 21 final categories, and the quotation book. The process of relating all categories to the central variables was again a highly iterative process of reading through the summarizing sentences and referring back to the original quotations, which assured constant validation of the presumed relationships. During this process, three category groups emerged in addition to the group of core categories. The first group of categories concerned the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational changes, and was labeled by the researchers as *outcome* categories. Secondly, there were categories that influence the employee's sense-making process and thus how the employees perceive the change, how well they understand the change and whether or not they evaluate the change as beneficial or harmful for themselves. These categories thus

directly influence the core categories, and were therefore labeled *influencing* categories. Thirdly, there were categories that according to the respondents were much stronger determinants of employees' eventual responses to organizational change than the influencing categories. For these other categories, the potential benefit or harm caused by the change did not seem to be of much significance. Respondents for example indicated that in case of a lack of trust in management, no positive contribution to the change could be expected, and that if trust had been broken in a prior change, it would be hard to mobilize employees a second or third time. Another example concerns the availability of alternatives for employees. Respondents indicated that if it is hard for employees to find a new job elsewhere, either because of one's skill or market circumstances, they will not put their jobs at risk by obstructing the change. This third group of categories was therefore labeled as *overruling* categories, since they have the potential to overrule the answer to the 'what's in it for me' question and thus to cause a negative attitude towards change, whereas from a theoretical standpoint a positive response would be expected (and vice versa).

In the next section the results of the analyses will be presented for all 21 categories, to serve as basis for the conceptual model to be constructed at the end of the results section.

3.5 Results

This section presents the main results for each of the 21 categories that emerged from the axial coding phase. These categories are organized per category group, starting with the outcome categories, followed by the core categories, the influencing categories, and finally the overruling categories. An overview of all categories derived from the analyses is offered in Table 1. At the end of this results section, the conceptual model that emerged from the selective coding phase is presented.

3.5.1 Outcome categories

Affective responses towards change

According to the respondents, organizational changes provoke a variety of affective responses among employees. These responses include include negative responses such as panic, anger, uncertainty, anxiety, worries and feelings of frustration and disappointment, as well as positive responses like enthusiasm, happiness and eagerness. A Swiss Organizational Development manager of a leading global production organization illustrated the variety of affective responses that can emerge in times of organizational change:

I guess I've met with a huge variety of human feelings depending on the change context. I've met people that were frustrated. I've met people that were angry,

furious even. Some were in despair. Some were eager, enthusiastic, looking forward to, being happy about the change. I've seen people cry. I guess - yes - throughout my career... I think, give me a feeling, and I probably could give you a situation where I've encountered that feeling.

However, the affective responses of uncertainty and anxiety, primarily mentioned as an unavoidable consequence of a lack of information and communication, were mentioned most frequently and were indicated as the most common initial response to an impending change.

TABLE 1
Overview of categories derived from the analyses

Category group	Categories	Category characteristics / cluster
Outcome categories	Affective responses to change	Attitude towards change cluster
	Behavioral responses to change	Attitude towards change cluster
	Cognitive responses to change	Attitude towards change cluster
Core categories	Understanding of change	Change perception cluster
	Perceived need for change	Change perception cluster
	Degree personally affected	'What's in it for me' cluster
	Expected individual consequences	'What's in it for me' cluster
Influencing categories	Communication	Change antecedent
	Leadership	Change antecedent
	Involvement	Change antecedent
	Personality	Pre-change antecedent, ind. level
	Tenure	Pre-change antecedent, ind. level
	Change culture	Pre-change antecedent, org. level
	Corporate culture	Pre-change antecedent, org. level
	Labor unions	Pre-change antecedent, soc. level
	National differences	Pre-change antecedent, soc. level
Overruling categories	Psychological contract content	Pre-change antecedent, ind. level
	Ability to change	Change antecedent
	Availability of alternatives	Pre-change antecedent, soc. level
	Trust	Pre-change antecedent, ind. level
	Psychological contract state	Pre-change antecedent, ind. level

Behavioral responses towards change

The respondents reported that the behavioral responses most frequently encountered were verbal expressions of disagreement towards colleagues or management. Examples given included gossiping, complaining, openly expressing criticism, raising concerns, asking critical questions and talking negatively about the change. However, other behavioral responses, both positive and negative, were

reported as well. Positive behaviors that were mentioned were eagerness, pro-active exploration of the change, positive talking about the change, helpfulness, flexibility, cooperation with the change, attempts to persuade others, efforts to promote oneself as an advocate of the change process, continuing to perform regular activities as a means of supporting the own business or client, and demonstrating pro-activeness. It was noted that these behaviors could either be a natural consequence of intrinsic motivation, as well as a strategic attempt to capture the attention of by management. The negative behaviors mentioned by respondents can be divided into passive and active behaviors. Examples of passive behaviors were a wait-and-see attitude and behavior aimed at making oneself as invisible as possible, while waiting for the change to be over. Examples of more active negative behaviors included reducing the effort and energy put into one's work, which could lead to either consciously or unconsciously providing wrong information, starting later and leaving earlier from the office, working at home instead of at the office, sticking to prior ways of working or reverting to prior ways of working. A national HR director of a global retail organization gave a striking illustration of what sticking to prior ways of working could look like in practice, regardless whether this example illustrates active negative behavior or great dedication:

There's someone here, over there in the corner, she has been with [organization] for 25 years, so she was employee 002. She has experienced everything, and always from a payroll position. She has her own systems which she has built over these 25 years. She went along with some system upgrades, but actually, she still does what she did 25 years ago. She keeps everything on paper. So her binders... They are gigantic! It is quite magnificent too. Well... it's almost a museum. But if I need something, then she always finds it. She prints every e-mail and keeps it. While you could do that just as well with disks or USB-sticks... And then you can say whatever you want, and she will do that, but she won't give up this parallel system.

The interviewees noted that depending on labor market circumstances, internal opportunities, or one's personal situation, some employees choose to perform as a minimal player. Others may ask for an exit package or just leave the organization. Additional active negative behaviors that the respondents had witnessed were employees who were up in arms, were rebellious, reluctant to share information, or actively trying to block the change, for example by involving labor parties and unions.

Cognitive responses towards change

According to the managers, employees' cognitive responses to an organizational change were primarily focused on thoughts regarding the consequences of the change. Although thinking about the consequences for the colleagues or the organization was mentioned several times, the vast majority of the respondents noted that employees primarily considered their individual consequences. More specifically, the consequences for one's own job, way of working, working life, comfort zone, relation to colleagues and relation to management were mentioned as cognitive responses to change. The key notion mentioned in this respect was 'what's in it for me'. It was stated repeatedly that if an employee sincerely believes he or she

can personally benefit from the change, whether it concerns reward, job content or another element relevant to the particular individual, this employee will demonstrate considerably less opposition to the change. The respondent's perception that personal benefits were more decisive for an employee's attitude towards change than the perceived organizational benefits was nicely illustrated by an Italian change consultant, who noted at the end of the interview:

We didn't cover the personal benefit you can see in the changes. Because I think that every employee can look at the benefits for the company and the benefits for the entire organization, for the business, etcetera, etcetera. But at the end it's a personal contract. So anyone can think what is in it for me in these changes. And that's why you can have the difference between the different employees.

Concerning the perceived consequences of the change, several respondents noted the different general dispositional perspectives employees can have about these consequences. It was mentioned that certain people do not think in terms of consequences, but in terms of opportunities. One respondent indicated that talented people in particular would think about consequences in terms of future opportunities rather than threats. Other cognitive responses to change mentioned by the respondents included trying to understand the rationale for the change, trying to understand what will happen during the change period, thinking about whether or not the change can be trusted, thinking about what change could occur in the future, and thinking about how they can personally influence the change. Finally, confusion and fantasizing about doom scenarios were mentioned as cognitive responses resulting from a lack of knowledge or information about the change.

The preceding results demonstrate that a primary focus on behavior and visible responses to the change neglects the important role of feelings and thoughts in the overall attitude of an employee towards a change. Not only do the results show a considerable variety of affective and cognitive responses, but various respondents also stressed that feelings and thoughts are often at odds with the visible behavior of the individuals. A Dutch People Strategy manager for example stated:

Well, you know, I very much believe in the iceberg metaphor. You have all kinds of pyramid-like things, by which you cannot always get insight in the beliefs. So I don't see them, unless people express them directly in their behavior or in their talking.

This same manager also indicated that employees' eventual behavior towards change depended on their feelings and thoughts. However, she noted that it also depends on the profile and personality of the individual whether emotional or rational considerations prevail and thus influence the eventual behavioral responses to the change.

3.5.2 Core categories

Understanding of change

An employee's understanding of the change was mentioned by the respondents primarily in relation to the roadmap of the change, i.e. the change process ahead. According to the respondents, employees need to understand where the change is heading to, in what direction the organization will move, what the different phases of the change will look like and to what end state the change will lead. Moreover, the bigger picture should be made clear by management, so that an employee understands the vision behind the change, the ultimate goal, and the fit of the change with the strategy of the organization. In other words, employees need to understand the rationale behind the change. The European HR director of a global cement production organization emphasized the important role communication plays in creating this understanding:

If the employee understands the change, there is no problem. (...) I think what happens is if the employee doesn't understand the rationale of the change, then they go back on 'yes, this is what was promised, this is why I was appointed, this was my job, these were my conditions', then they fall back on what they believe are their securities. (...) But there must be a lot of communication and there must be a lot of time for questions. The employees can ask questions 'Why?', 'What's happening?', 'For what reason?', 'Where are we going?'.

Perceived need for change

Another factor mentioned by the respondents during most interviews concerns the necessity of the change, as perceived by the employee. Thus, why does the organization need this change and why do I as an individual employee need this change? The respondents stressed the importance for organizations and management to formulate a clear and unambiguous answer to the 'why question' in the mind of employees. A perceived need for change, which was often referred to as 'burning platform' during the interviews, results in more acceptance of the change. The 'golden city' metaphor was also used several times to illustrate that it can be hard for employees to understand why they should change or to perceive any sense of urgency when working in a 'golden city', i.e. a well-performing organization. An Italian Vice-President of a global consultancy firm noted:

I'm currently working in a company, a very successful company here in Italy, a very rich, a very well-known one in the market. With a strong brand. Changing something in that company is very complicated. Because, why change something that is doing very, very well? (...) The acceptance of change is very difficult, because OK, we make a lot of money, we are the first in the market, nobody has a product like us. Why do we have to change? (...) So it's more difficult to change in that company, in which everything is going well, than in another company in which 'if you don't do that, you die'. Let's take Fiat for example. The Fiat case. In two years, the new CEO made an extraordinary work. They came from a situation in which Fiat was close to closure. Currently, Fiat is leading the change of the

automotive industry. Why? Because it was very tight and focused; if we don't do that, we are dying.

Degree personally affected

Most respondents also pointed to the degree to which employees are personally affected by the organizational change. It was mentioned that if an individual employee is not much affected by a change, his or her response to that change is likely to be less extreme and often more supportive, compared to a situation in which an employee's job or private situation is directly impacted by the change. In the latter case, the status quo is affected at an individual level, which results in more extreme responses, according to the respondents. However, an employee's perception of the extent to which he or she will be affected is not likely to be a stable state of mind throughout the change process. It was stated that at the beginning of the change process, the management often sketches just the outlines of a change, which is perhaps still months away. The individual's perception of the personal impact of a change is likely to become clearer as the change is progressing and the targeted end state draws nearer. The more an employee perceives that he or she is affected by the change, the more extreme the response will be. However, it was indicated that the actual nature of the response, thus whether the response is positive or negative, depends on the expected consequences for the individual.

Expected individual consequences

The expected individual consequences of a change, at least as perceived by the employee, turned out to be the most crucial final determinant of one's attitude to a change. Even though the necessity of a change for the organization as a whole or for the sake of efficiency or effectiveness, the individual benefits for the individual employee should be abundantly clear in order for him or her to assume a genuinely positive attitude. Potential benefits mentioned by the respondents included an enhanced powerbase, increased opportunities for professional development, more autonomy or an improved compensation package. Benefits may also relate to a better fit with private circumstances or an improved work-life balance. What will actually benefit an employee therefore differs per individual. A German COO emphasized how important it is for management to adequately and pro-actively address the individual's 'what's in it for me' question:

For me organizational change and the resistance to organizational change are connected to the personal 'what's in it for me' character. The more you can forecast the interest of the employee and you can fulfill this, the more happiness you will create and the less resistance you will get.

3.5.3 Influencing categories

Communication

The importance of communication featured prominently in the responses of almost all respondents. The general perception was that proper communication can diminish negative responses to a change such as anxiety, uncertainty, gossiping, opposition and quitting. The communication-related responses of the interviewees can roughly be categorized as addressing either *what* is communicated, or *to who* is being communicated?

First of all, regarding *what* is communicated, respondents emphasized the importance of communicating the ‘why’ of the change, i.e. the rationale for the change, the vision behind it, the burning platform and the necessity of change. Explaining these factors will increase the perceived legitimacy of the change among employees. Furthermore, the roadmap following from the change objectives should be explained, which not only means explaining the successive steps but especially also the projected end state. Less specific though mentioned frequently and explicitly were the terms ‘transparency’ and ‘honesty’. They seem to serve as principles that guide concrete communication activities. As stated by the respondents, transparency means that you also communicate change aspects that are negative for the change recipients, such as redundancies. Moreover, management should also be transparent about aspects that cannot be divulged to employees, for example head office decisions. Furthermore, honesty and transparency imply that, whenever this is the case, the change agents admit that they cannot (yet) foresee particular aspects of the change, for example aspects relating to the timeframe of the change program or to the consequences of the change for individuals.

Regarding the second communication element, *to whom* is being communicated, much emphasis was put on the importance of individualized and segmented communication. Communication must explicate what the impact and the consequences of the change will be for each individual employee. Although one respondent mentioned that group communication could prevent the perception that a particular measure, like a salary freeze, will only apply to certain individuals or to a limited group of people, most respondents argued that communication should be individualized and personalized. Further, ‘segmented communication’ means that change agents should provide the appropriate information to each target group. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach does not apply to communication in change processes. Respondents noted that for that reason, the selection of stakeholders that provide communication and the media that are used for communication should be carefully considered.

Finally, some respondents emphasized the importance of continuous communication throughout the entire change process starting from day one, and the availability of feedback channels to stimulate a dialogue rather than having one-way communication only. The prominent positioning of these communication elements in the interviews underlines their importance in practice.

Leadership

During the interviews, leadership was indicated as having the potential to make employees start moving in a certain direction. It was mentioned that a change needs leaders rather than managers to create commitment, acceptance, trust in the change and thus to really 'make things happen'. According to the respondents, leaders serve as role models in times of change and a lack of leadership can therefore generate negativity. The central role that leaders play in communicating the change was also emphasized. A few respondents noted that the direct supervisor's support for the change may determine the attitude of an individual employee to a greater extent than top management's support. Still, top management support was mentioned as a prerequisite for a successful change implementation. At the same time, as some respondents illustrated, organizational changes can create confusion about who the leader is, which can be quite destabilizing. This applies especially if the internal environment is characterized by strong politics and the leaders are jostling for power, which is often the case during restructurings, mergers and acquisitions, and outsourcing activities.

Involvement

Involvement in the change was indicated as an opportunity for employees to express themselves, to share their feelings and emotions and to access information more easily, resulting in more acceptance, pro-activity, motivation and commitment to the change. It was also identified as an instrument to change the mind of employees resisting the change. Giving responsibility to employees by involving them in the change, even if these employees are not motivated overall, fosters commitment to the change. And as one respondent explained, giving responsibility can also be used by management to express trust in the employee, which then motivates the employee to live up to management's expectations. The Belgian HR director of an international bank who had led a large restructuring program explained how she appointed two hundred change ambassadors. These were closely involved in the change and were continuously given information prior to general communications to the 4500 employees of the organization. Although this group of two hundred employees was not a random sample, and generalization is therefore not possible, she indicated that employee turnover among these two hundred people was considerably lower compared to the rest of the workforce. As an antonym for 'involving', several respondents mentioned the word 'imposition'. An imposed change, thus with little opportunity for participation and involvement, will result in less synergy, less acceptance and a narrower focus on the benefits of the change, which all together results in more resistance to the change.

Personality

Personality was also said to be an important determinant of one's response to a change. People with an open, positive, flexible and risk-seeking personality were considered better able to deal with an organizational change or even to embrace change, while people who are more introvert, dogmatic and negative were characterized as not being supportive of change. A few respondents mentioned that

people by nature seek security and will try to preserve the status quo, while any change, by definition, breaks the status quo.

Tenure

Tenure was mentioned as a factor that can influence the extent to which an individual employee is used to organizational change in general. Changing position, department or even organization is a considerable change in the life of an employee. Therefore, employees who have not changed position or organization often will probably have encountered fewer impactful changes to their daily work or working environment. As a result, these employees are likely to be less used to change and more opposed to change. Tenure was also indicated as a factor that shapes an employee's understanding of the context in which the organization is embedded. Employees who have worked in the same organization for many years and who haven't seen many other organizations, their ways of working and their cultures, are likely to have less understanding of the context in which the current organization is embedded. As one respondent put it, these people develop barriers to think beyond their own immediate setting. The national Organization Development and Talent manager of a leading Spanish telecom company mentioned:

When you have changed, you have been working in different companies, you are younger... you can understand things that are happening out of [organization]... Perhaps you have more arguments to understand why you should change.

Change culture

Change culture represents the extent to which the collective of individuals in an organization is used to change. It was noted often that if employees are used to organizational change and it's in the DNA of the organization, it diminishes the anxiety and worries about a change and increases the employees' flexibility and their perception of change as a natural occurrence. The European HR director of a global company active in the welding industry explained that the majority of his employees had never worked in another industry, and many of those not even for another company. As a result, they were not particularly open to change, simply because they did not know that things can be done in different ways. He therefore initiated assignments to foster a change culture:

So as from this year, all of my guys, my teams, my HR local managers, they have an objective which is 'go and benchmark a best-in-class type of company and share that with everybody in [organization]' (...) It just opens our mind. My goal is not maybe to come up with a lot of very good ideas, but my first objective is to have those guys going outside and see that there is a world outside of [organization] (...) And now they are in the mood of 'yeah, we can do something... something different'.

Although frequent organizational changes help build a change culture in which employees are more open to change, it was also noted that people could then tire of change. However, respondents added that this would depend on the impact of prior

organizational changes, as well as the nature of these changes, in particular whether they had positive or negative consequences for the individual employees.

Corporate culture

Corporate culture was put forward by various respondents as a set of values to which change initiatives are compared. As a Swiss OD manager explained, once employees no longer feel aligned with the corporate culture as a result of a change, they could decide to leave the organization. In line with this argumentation, an HR Vice President who had worked in various European countries argued that during acquisitions or divestments, the shock regarding the other party's corporate culture largely determines how people react. It was furthermore stated repeatedly that the general nature of the approach to change chosen by management (e.g. a stepwise or a 'big bang' approach), as well as the concrete change management practices, should fit in with this corporate culture in order to run a successful change program.

Labor unions

Various respondents mentioned the influence of labor unions on the change perceptions of employees, mainly in countries where employees are well protected by law, such as Belgium. In such countries any large organizational restructuring must be carefully discussed with the labor unions to prevent problems at a later stage. A Belgian HR director explained in detail the successful process of relocating a large store to another town. Individual solutions were offered to solve individual problems. However, the collectivistic perspective of the labor unions created a lot of problems as soon as a few disgruntled employees found their way to the labor unions. From that moment on, the individual solutions created for the majority of the employees did not hold. Similarly, an Italian national HR director of a global IT organization emphasized the importance of maintaining a good relationship with unions, because it helps a company to manage a transition. This would especially be the case in countries with protective labor legislation, where it is hard to implement large restructurings or to dismiss employees. As noted by a few interviewees, media can have a considerable influence on how employees perceive an organizational change, and labor unions can easily attract the attention of the media. A final argument put forward by an Italian transformation consultant was that strong protective labor legislation could slow down a transformation. The argumentation was that in this scenario, people would not feel a sense of personal urgency to adapt to the new situation, since they were protected by law, which results in passivity or resistance.

National differences

Several respondents mentioned the significance of national differences. Especially the notion of 'national culture' was mentioned often, although the influence attributed to national culture varied among the respondents. Most noted that it is easier to implement changes in more collectivist Asian cultures like China, and that changes provoke less negative responses here than in more individualistic

countries. In the latter countries it is more important for people to be involved and informed, and in the end it requires consensus to make a change work. It was also noted that corporate culture has the potential to overrule national culture, for example in a situation where an originally European organization has a subsidiary in Asia. It was stated that an individual's identification with the company and its culture is a stronger determinant of an employee's response to change than national culture. When considering the influence of national culture on employee responses to change, the European HR director of a global pharmaceutical organization colorfully explained how Americans were more open to organizational change than Europeans:

I mean Americans, an American family you know, an executive of 45 - 50 would think of nothing, would pack up his carpet, role the family in, and move to New York tomorrow, because he's got his new job there, whatever. In Europe, that's very hard.

Psychological contract content

The content of the psychological contract was described as a pair of glasses through which the employee looks when evaluating the organizational change and attempting to answer the 'what's in it for me' question. More specifically, the employee compares his or her understanding of what was promised and thus what he or she may expect to the anticipated individual impact, benefits or harms of the change. Thus, one's prior beliefs concerning the psychological contract contribute to shaping the answer to the 'what's in it for me' question. What did I expect? How important it this to me? And what do I expect from the new situation after the change? One respondent noted that mapping these individual 'what's in it for me' expectations would help management to live up to these expectations, and will thus lead to a more positive attitude to change. Another respondent applied the psychological contract to explain general differences in adaptability between certain economic sectors. He noted that the change mindset within in the psychological contracts of state employees will likely not be developed as much as for example in high-tech businesses or consulting environments. He explained that in the latter economic sectors, which are highly influenced by the dynamics of their environment, adaptability is part of the culture and part of the psychological contract between an employee and the employer. Additionally, a Portuguese national HR director of a large bank explained that employees tend to be focused on the negative parts of the psychological contract, while forgetting or taking for granted the basics and positive aspects. In their cultural change program they therefore deliberately emphasized the positive elements of the psychological contract of employees, with the aim of leveraging these elements to influence the answering of the 'what's in it for me' question.

3.5.4 Overruling categories

Ability to change

Ability to change was identified as a factor that can overrule a positive answering of the ‘what’s in it for me’ question, thus putting the employee into negative mode. Several ability facets were mentioned by the respondents. First, an employee’s ability to change was said to be influenced by the adequacy and quality of training, for example on how to use a newly implemented system. Another aspect mentioned was the availability of technology, such as a self-service application to contribute to a cultural change, making employees master of their own professional destiny. The European Talent manager of a global aluminum manufacturer provided a striking example of how the introduction of self-service via a computer at the plant resulted in an unexpected situation, in which employees simply did not have the ability to change:

We were laughing once, because a plant manager told me ‘how do you suppose.. have you seen the hands of my workers?’ he said. ‘Why?’ ‘They are so big, that if they press one button on the keyboard, they click on three or four buttons’. Ok, then you will only use some other things. But it’s true. It’s a practicality that you’re missing sometimes when you work at this level.

Another factor mentioned often was the time available to change or to participate in the change process. As one respondent noted, the regular amount of workload can usurp all one’s energy. Another respondent mentioned that in times of economic hardship, the workload and pressure is already very high, which makes it even more difficult for employees to change. A factor related to the amount of time available to change is the speed of the change. As noted several times, people simply need time to get used to the idea of change. A too high speed or a too narrow time-frame for implementing the change hinders employees in getting acquainted with the new way of working and/or the change of mind-set.

Availability of alternatives

The availability of alternatives is another factor that can overrule one’s evaluation of the change. Respondents indicated that if market conditions make it hard for employees to find a new suitable job elsewhere, they are likely to respond more positively to the change, even if the expected outcome is not as beneficial for the employee as he or she might like. In such a situation the actual attitude towards change is thus driven by job security considerations. In a situation where there are plenty of external opportunities, there is less need for constructive change behavior if the change is expected to be detrimental to the individual employee. Additionally, it was noted that the private situation can prevent an employee from taking any risks that could harm his or her financial position, which consequently influences his or her attitude towards a change. As a Dutch People Strategy manager noted, there is a big difference in how you respond to change when you have been with the company for 30 years, you have a mortgage and you are the household income earner, than

when you're a 20-year-old talent in a completely different phase of life, with less financial obligations.

Trust

Trust is another overruling factor mentioned frequently as a central factor determining one's attitude to a change. According to the respondents, trust in management and leadership results in a more positive attitude towards change and more willingness to embrace the change. Conversely, if the employment relationship is characterized by mistrust resulting from multiple negative experiences of seeing trust broken, it is hard to mobilize employees a next time. Trust can therefore be an important enabler of organizational change. A French implementation professional illustrated the overruling capacity of trust, stating that trust in management or the company in general could turn an uncomfortable situation into a comfortable one. The interviews also made clear that an individual employee can have trust in the organization as a whole, in management as a group of people, or in a specific manager or leader. In this respect, it was mentioned by several respondents that a leader is not necessarily the direct supervisor but can also be an informal leader or former hierarchical leader. Depending on the context of the change, either a group or an individual can represent leadership that is trusted. For example, a Dutch manager noted that an employee wants to trust the organization to take the right decisions regarding the change in general. Yet when it comes to the 'what's in it for me' question, trust in the direct supervisor was said to be the most crucial determinant of one's attitude to change. In line with this observation, a French HR director explained that simply saying 'trust me' to employees can be very powerful during a change process, especially when you as management cannot disclose all the information you have. Since the leader can be represented by various roles or people in different situations, the Belgian director of a global IT organization emphasized the importance of a set of shared values. Indeed, as an Italian deputy HR director stressed, when employees perceive a gap between personal or professional values and company values, this results in mistrust. Most of the comments on trust made by the respondents related to the trust underlying the employment relationship. However, trust in the change throughout the entire change process was addressed as well. Management should act in accordance with promises earlier on in the change process, that is, it must walk the talk. If not, employees will become suspicious which can then result in mistrust.

Psychological contract state

The state of the psychological contract, or in other words the extent to which implicit and explicit promises have been fulfilled by an organization, was mentioned by the respondents as being an important determinant of one's eventual attitude to a change. If an organization is perceived by an employee to repeatedly live up to its promises, trust is created which results in more commitment, support, positive contributions, and willingness to change. On the other hand, a history of unfulfilled promises results in mistrust, which was indicated by the interviewees to cause skepticism, suspicion, caution, temporization and passiveness regarding the change.

Actual employee turnover was also mentioned as an outcome, since a lack of trust resulting from repeatedly unfulfilled promises undermines an employee's faith that the change may herald a shift in this tradition of under-fulfillment of promises. Furthermore, it was noted that a well-fulfilled psychological contract serves as a buffer that prevents employees from immediately going into a negative mode as soon as a negative event occurs during the course of a change program.

In a few divergent comments, respondents indicated that a well-fulfilled psychological contract could result in negative responses to a change, since it means that the outcome of the change could potentially be less optimal for the employee, and that the organization might no longer be able to fulfill its promises as it did in the past. On the other hand, a few respondents stated that an unfulfilled psychological contract could lead to a positive attitude to a change, since it might mean that the organization will be better able to live up to its promises in the future. However, the common line of reasoning was that well-fulfilled psychological contracts create trust, which consequently leads to a positive attitude to organizational change.

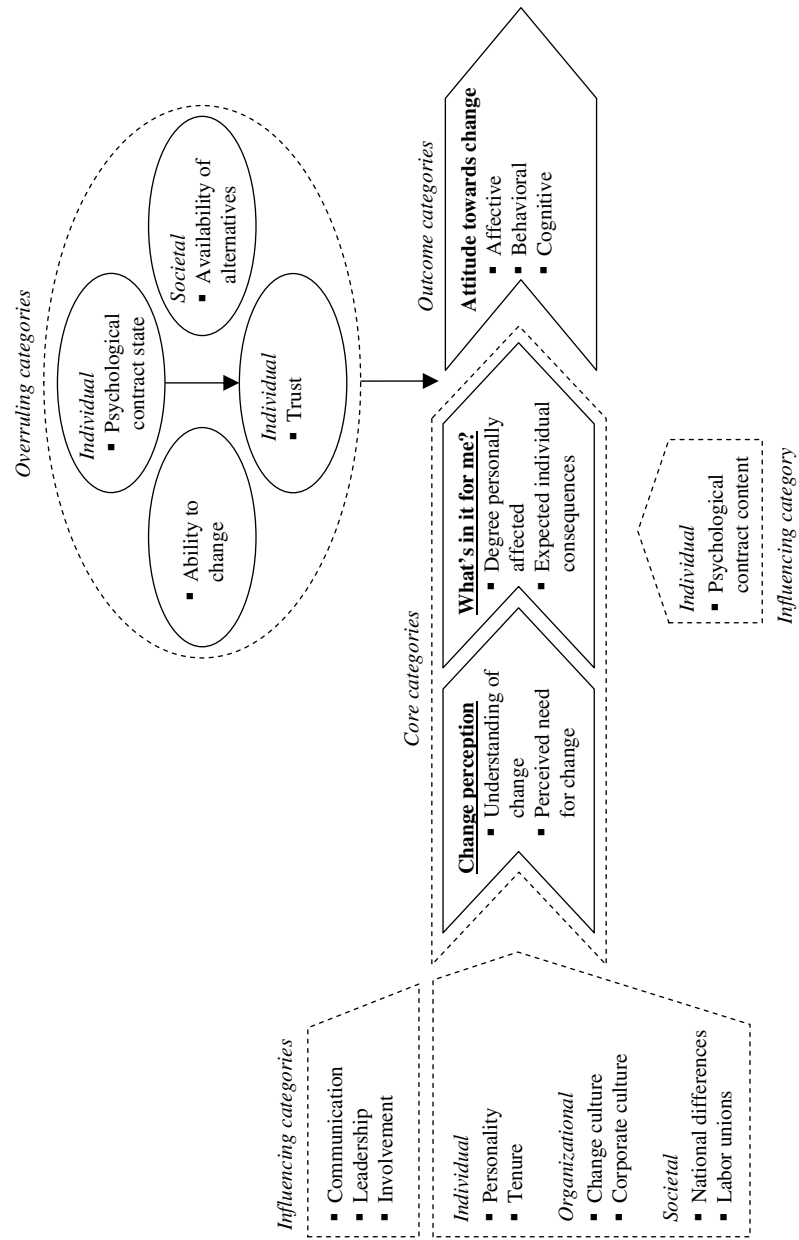
When considering the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract, the main line of reasoning was that employees who felt they did a good job in fulfilling their promises were more engaged, resulting in a more positive attitude to a change. They would be more open to change, cooperate more in the change process and maintain a high level of productivity. According to the most respondents, they would also see the change as an opportunity, and believe they have nothing to fear from the change. In case of an unfulfilled employee side of the psychological contract, the employee is already disengaged, which most likely results in negative responses to change such as passiveness, reluctance, criticism, attempts to protect the status quo and anxiety that their under-performance will no longer be accepted. However, several respondents also raised the rhetorical question of how many employees will feel that they fail to fulfill their side of the psychological contract.

Although a well-fulfilled employee-side of the psychological contract suggests a good level of engagement that is likely to lead to a positive response to a change, the interviewees emphasized that it could also jeopardize one's cooperation with the change. Employees who feel they have fulfilled or even over-fulfilled their promises to the organization might perceive a sense of entitlement, which could lead to a sense of betrayal, insufficient recognition or insufficient involvement in the change or the decision-making process. This could subsequently lead to negative responses to the organizational change.

3.5.5 The conceptual model

As explained in detail in the method section, the conceptual model of this study was constructed during the iterative selective coding process. This model comprises all 21 categories described in the first part of this results section, and is presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Attitude towards change model. The bullets represent the 21 categories that were derived from the analyses.



Firstly, the conceptual model shows that the *attitude towards change* cluster comprises the outcome categories ‘Affective’, ‘Behavioral’ and ‘Cognitive’, which indicates that a focus on only one or two of these response components produces an incomplete picture of an employee’s attitude towards a change.

Secondly, at the center of the model, the four core categories are positioned as main determinants of an employee’s attitude towards change. The cluster *change perception*, which comprises the core categories ‘Understanding of change’ and ‘Perceived need for change’, concerns their general perception of the vision behind the change, its rationale and the change process ahead. The change perceptions subsequently determine the employees’ individual answer to the *what’s in it for me* question. This cluster, which comprises the core categories ‘Degree personally affected’ and ‘Expected individual consequences’, concerns the individual evaluation of whether the change is beneficial for this particular individual employee, rather than for the organization as a whole or for a team. If the assessment of the ‘what’s in it for me’ question produces as positive answer, an individual’s attitude towards change will be positive as well, while a negative outcome results in negative affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to a change.

Thirdly, the model depicts the influencing categories presented in the first part of this results section. When applying Oreg et al.’s (2011) distinction between change and pre-change antecedents, three influencing categories can be labeled as change antecedents, namely ‘Communication’, ‘Leadership’ and ‘Involvement’. Pre-change influencing categories at an individual level are ‘Personality’, ‘Tenure’ and ‘Psychological contract content’. At an organizational level the pre-change influencing categories are ‘Change culture’ and ‘Corporate culture’. Further, the pre-change influencing categories at a societal level are ‘National differences’ and ‘Labor unions’. Except for ‘Psychological contract content’, all influencing variables were found to be influencers of the core cluster of change perception. These influencing categories frame the perception of an individual employee about an organizational change. The influence category of ‘Psychological contract content’, on the other hand, influences the core cluster of ‘what’s in it for me’. Thus, the content of the psychological contract influences the individual evaluation of whether the organizational change will be beneficial or harmful for the particular individual employee.

Fourthly, the model includes the four overruling categories ‘Ability to change’ (change antecedent), ‘Availability of alternatives’ (pre-change antecedent, societal level), ‘Trust’ and ‘Psychological contract state’ (pre-change antecedents, individual level). Although a positive evaluation of the ‘what’s in it for me question’ generally results in a positive attitude towards change and vice versa, these overruling categories have the potential to reverse this relationship. Thus, even if change is perceived by the individual employee as beneficial for oneself, a lack of ability to change, a lack of trust in management, or the availability of alternative jobs elsewhere might still cause negative responses. The overruling category of ‘Psychological contract state’ is positioned as an important determinant of the overruling variable ‘Trust’. Thus, a lack of psychological contract fulfillment causes a decrease in trust in the organization and its representatives. All overruling variables have the potential to transform a negative evaluation of the ‘what’s in it for me question’ into a positive attitude towards change as well. For example, a history

of fulfilled promises creates high levels of trust and might give management the benefit of the doubt if negative individual consequences are expected in times of organizational change.

In the following discussion section, the three research questions as presented in the introduction will be answered. Furthermore, the implications of the results for researchers and practitioners are presented.

3.6 Discussion

The principal purpose of this research was to acquire more insight into the managerial perspective on how the psychological contract influences an employee's attitude towards change. The results demonstrate that, according to managers, the content of the psychological contract influences the employee's own ideas on the 'what's in it for me question', i.e. on the extent to which the organizational change will prove personally beneficial. The state of the psychological contract was furthermore identified as an overruling factor with the potential of reversing a positive evaluation of the 'what's in it for me' question into a negative attitude towards change and vice versa.

Concerning the extent to which the three-dimensional construct of attitude towards change can be justified and which factors influence these attitudes towards organizational change, the results demonstrate that managers witness a wide variety of affective, behavioral and cognitive responses. Respondents also indicated that these feelings, behaviors and thoughts can coexist and range from very negative to very positive. The results of this study therefore demonstrate that the adoption of the neutrally phrased and multidimensional attitude towards change construct can be justified.

The results furthermore reveal eighteen antecedent categories that, according to managers, determine the attitude of employees to organizational change. The analyses reveal (1) core categories, which concern the employees' change perception and the individual 'what's in it for me' question, (2) influencing categories that influence these core categories, and (3) categories that have the potential to overrule the theoretically and logically presumed relationship between that answer to the 'what's in it for me' question and the consequent attitude towards change. The overruling categories are therefore decisive determinants of the eventual affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational change.

The results of this study have implications for researchers as well as for practitioners. In the remainder of this discussion section, these implications with related limitations and research recommendations are discussed.

The first implication concerns the contribution of this study to understanding sense-making processes in times of organizational change. As Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph and DePalma (2006) have emphasized, a change recipient's perception of organizational change "may be both consistent with and diverge from what change agents intend" (p. 202). The individual's perception of the change was found to be one of the core determinants of attitude towards change. However, this primarily cognitive sense-making process is influenced by various variables, of which many

cannot or not easily be influenced by organizational leaders and change managers. This relates to the distinction between pre-change and change antecedents, in which pre-change antecedents are not directly linked to a particular organizational change. As noted by Oreg et al. (2011), most quantitative studies on attitude towards change research have focused on the influence of change process antecedents, such as participation, communication and procedural fairness. However, as demonstrated here, most antecedent categories are not related to a particular organizational change, but rather to the general state of the employment relationship. Factors such as trust and change culture, for example, primarily concern the situation prior to the introduction of the organizational change. Since these factors shape the individual's perception and evaluation of the change, they should be carefully considered by management during the planning and designing stages of a specific change. Furthermore, the present study demonstrates the central role of the psychological contract in the sense-making process. Fulfillment of the psychological contract creates trust, which can compensate worries about the individual negative consequences of the change. Additionally, the evaluation of the change depends not only on the individual perception of the change, but also on the content of the psychological contract. Empirical quantitative research on the relationship between the psychological contract and employee responses to change is scarce, however. Research on the antecedents of attitude towards change can therefore benefit from the inclusion of general quality indicators of the state of the employment relationship such as trust, commitment, engagement and the psychological contract. This is of particular interest as these factors influence the sense-making process, and thus the general perception of an organizational change. Moreover, as demonstrated here, these factors can explain why employees sometimes respond contrary to what is expected by change agents, who often place much emphasis on the change process itself and disregard the general employment context. However, as Herold, Fedor and Caldwell (2007) concluded, "organizations cannot roll out change after change assuming that each change is an independent event" without carefully considering "extrachange factors, such as the workplace setting in which the change is occurring" (p. 949). To conclude, change agents can benefit from an increased focus on pre-change antecedents, which are perhaps hard to influence in the short term but that do largely shape the employee's perception of an organizational change. If an increased focus on pre-change antecedents is combined with change management and communication practices that (1) focus on the individual's understanding of a change, (2) intend to dispel questions about the change in the heads of employees, and (3) consequently segment information with a view to individual needs, the likelihood of positive change attitudes will increase.

The second implication of this research concerns the adoption of the managerial perspective. Management plays a crucial role in both pre-change and change antecedent categories such as communication, change culture, corporate culture, psychological contract content, psychological contract state and trust. It is crucial that managers have insight into employees' needs, expectations and perception of promises. Business leaders and change managers with a lack of sincere interest in the psychological contracts of their employees are likely to be confronted with unexpected and unpredictable attitudes towards organizational change. In times of change employees are triggered to evaluate their psychological contracts (Guzzo,

Noonan & Elron, 1994), and to examine whether the deal made earlier in the employment relationship is still intact. This implies an evaluation of whether the exchange relationship is still well-balanced. Moreover, during changes managers are more likely to be unable or unwilling to live up to promises made previously (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Knowledge of and a strong emphasis on the psychological contract before as well as during organizational changes therefore seems a necessity rather than a desirability.

This study only addressed the managerial perspective on the antecedents of attitude towards change, while a vast amount of prior empirical research has focused on the employee's perspective. The question that has to be addressed is whether or not the managerial beliefs are supported by empirical evidence on employee views. If it turns out that employee views are different, managerial practices and interventions might very well be ineffective or even counterproductive. A recommendation for future research would therefore be to study both perspectives in a single organizational change context, and to identify whether there is a discrepancy between the two perspectives. More insight into the causes and consequences of discrepancies in views on individual needs, expectations and perceived promises would enable the identification of the relative importance of pre-change and change antecedents, as well as the importance of the psychological contract as pre-change antecedent.

The third implication concerns the multidimensional conceptualization of the attitude towards change construct. Although early writings about employee responses to change mainly focused on behavioral reactions, the affective and cognitive responses have been considered in recent decades as well. The recent adoption of the tripartite attitude towards change in conceptual as well as empirical research acknowledges the coexistence of divergent feelings, behaviors and thoughts in times of change and admits that these dimensions can be ambivalent (Piderit, 2000). The present research contributes to the understanding of the attitude towards change construct by demonstrating the broad variety of potential affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change and by showing that these responses should be considered as a continuum ranging from highly negative to very positive. Future research can benefit from using the more neutrally phrased and all-embracing attitude towards change construct rather than one-dimensional negative or positive concepts.

Future research could furthermore examine the sequential relationship between the three attitude dimensions. According to affective event theory, affective responses predict behavioral and cognitive responses, while the tripartite view on attitudes assumes that the three dimensions cause variations in the global attitude (Piderit, 2000). The ongoing debate on these two divergent perspectives could benefit from longitudinal empirical research on the multidimensional attitude towards change perspective. Our results demonstrate that in addition to observable behaviors, change agents should also consider the feelings and thoughts of employees when attempting to predict the failure or success of an organizational change. Although the important role of feelings and thoughts in a change process is indeed acknowledged in most change management approaches, change managers are often at a loss how to consider or effectively manage these affective and cognitive responses. Although less visible, the effect of affective and cognitive responses is

however likely to have a long-lasting influence, and may emerge as emotional exhaustion, burnout or quitting. Another reason for the inappropriate management of feelings and thoughts during change processes could be that the consideration of affective and cognitive responses requires mutual trust and an open dialogue between the individual employee and the individual manager. Such a dialogue can be difficult to achieve for both parties, especially if the manager is or is held to be responsible for negative consequences of the change or a potential breach of the employee's psychological contract.

An important limitation of this study is that we could not consider whether the influence of antecedents differs between attitude dimensions. The question whether certain antecedents are better predictors for affective response to change and others for the behavioral or cognitive responses was not addressed. In a study by Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009), for example, psychological contract fulfillment was only related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change, disregarding the behavioral and cognitive dimensions. This issue could also be addressed in future research. Similarly, the work-related outcomes of attitude towards change can be expected to differ for the attitude dimension as well. Oreg (2006), for example, assessed the influence of all three attitude towards change dimensions on job satisfaction, intention to quit and continuance commitment. The results showed that only the affective dimension influenced job satisfaction, only the behavioral dimension influenced intention to quit, and only the cognitive dimension influenced continuance commitment.

Another limitation of this study concerns the context in which it was performed. Given its explorative nature, the chosen approach aimed to include respondents active in various organizations, economic sectors and countries. As a result, various types of organizational change and groups of employees were considered, resulting in a broad perspective on attitudes towards change that is applicable to various organizational contexts. However, this approach has limitations as well. The fairly small sample size per country, for example, did not allow for a profound and country-specific argumentation regarding the influence of legislation, national culture and labor unions. Additionally, as all interviews were conducted in Europe, cultural differences between the countries are likely to be relatively small, compared to cultural differences between for example Europe and Asia or South America. Future research would therefore benefit from the inclusion of respondents from these various cultural settings to enable a comparison between cultures and to increase the validity of generalizations towards countries and cultures. This is especially relevant when studying the influence of the psychological contract on attitude towards change, since national cultures "have a bearing on the way psychological contracts function in the interplay between employers and employees" (Schalk & Soeters, 2008, p. 118). Another limitation of the data collection approach concerns the large diversity in economic sectors in which interviews were conducted. No explicit distinction was made regarding the level of the employees active in these sectors, for example between blue collar work and white collar work. An exclusive focus on a specific group, such as highly educated researchers or blue collar engineers, may yield valuable insights into motivations, perceptions and sense-making processes among these specific employees in times of change. Furthermore, no governmental organizations were included in the sample, which leaves this sector – stereotypically

assumed to be a less dynamic work environment with generally higher levels of resistance to change – unexamined. A recommendation for future research on the antecedents of attitude towards change, in particular the psychological contract, is to consider specific types of organizational change, industrial sectors and employee groups, and to increase cross-country and cross-cultural comparisons. By doing so, we can gradually increase our understanding of how the psychological contract influences employees' affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change.

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3.7 References

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4 The influence of psychological contract fulfillment on attitude towards change: the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment

Based on: Van den Heuvel, S., & Schalk, R. (Submitted). The influence of psychological contract fulfillment on attitude towards change: the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment.

Abstract

This study examined the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and employee attitudes towards organizational change. In a sample of 197 employees of a Dutch health insurance organization, data were gathered using questionnaires. The results confirmed that both trust and organizational commitment mediated the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. The fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was positively related to trust, which in turn was positively related to all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct. The fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract was positively related to organizational commitment, which in turn was negatively related to the affective dimension of the attitude towards change. Recommendations for future research and implications for practitioners are discussed.

4.1 Introduction

Advancing globalization and growing competition are forcing organizations to continuously change in order to survive (Fay & Lührmann, 2004). The speed and flexibility of an organization's response to a changing environment forms an important basis for competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). However, as in this permanently turbulent system "promises and deals made in good faith one day may be broken the next" (Guest, 2004, p. 543), the success of organizational change largely depends on how well the general employment relationship is managed and prepared for organizational change. Trust and organizational commitment positively influence employees' responses to organizational change (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2003). An internal organizational context characterized by high levels of mutual trust and genuinely committed employees is therefore likely to have more absorptive capacity to digest the increasing number of organizational changes than an internal organizational context suffering from general mistrust and an uncommitted workforce. The present study answers Guest's (2004) call to adopt the psychological contract as a framework to analyze the employment relationship in this permanently turbulent system. As the first study in the field of work and organization psychology, it is investigated here how the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change is mediated by the internal context variables of trust and organizational commitment.

The success of organizational change strongly depends on how employees respond to the change, and most modern industrial societies therefore value employees who are willing and able to respond positively to organizational change (Oreg, 2003). Consequently, researchers as well as change agents and business leaders are constantly seeking to identify the decisive antecedents of employees' responses to organizational change. Recently, Oreg, Vakola and Amenakis (2011) distinguished two types of antecedents, namely '*change antecedents*' and '*pre-change antecedents*'. Change antecedents "involve aspects of the change itself that influence change recipients' explicit reactions" (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 26) and can

involve variables related to the change process, the perceived benefit or harm caused by the change, and the content of the change. Pre-change antecedents, on the other hand, constitute conditions “which existed prior to the introduction of the change” (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 26) and as such, pre-change antecedents are not bound to a specific organizational change. Besides change recipient characteristics such as personality traits (Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007), coping styles (Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom, & Brown, 2002) and dispositional resistance to change (Oreg, 2003), pre-change antecedents include variables related to the internal organizational context. Typical pre-change internal context variables that influence employee responses to organizational change are trust and organizational commitment (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005). The psychological contract, as an individual’s beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1990), can be considered a pre-change antecedent as well. Just like trust and organizational commitment, the psychological contract already exists prior to an organizational change. An organizational change triggers employees to evaluate their psychological contracts (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994) and to determine whether or not the deal made in the past is still intact. Following exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1965), an employee attempts to restore balance in the psychological contract as soon as an imbalance is perceived, e.g. by lowering his or her contributions to the organization. However, we know little about the effect of the degree to which the psychological contract is fulfilled, i.e. the degree to which perceived promises are met, on employee attitudes towards change. Even Oreg et al.’s (2011) review of quantitative empirical studies of change recipients’ reactions published between 1948 and 2007 did not identify the psychological contract as a pre-change antecedent.

Although there is empirical evidence that trust and organizational commitment mediate the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and work-related outcomes such as personal satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, intention to leave and performance (Cantisano, Morales Domínguez, & Depolo, 2008), no research has been conducted so far on the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. Trust and organizational commitment have been identified as important consequences of the degree to which the psychological contract is fulfilled, however (Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Tekleab & Taylor, 2000; Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Sturges, Conway, Guest, & Liefoghe, 2005). Social exchange research has even demonstrated that implicit reciprocal exchange generates stronger trust and commitment among employees than explicitly negotiated exchange (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). Furthermore, trust and organizational commitment have been identified as relevant determinants of employee responses to organizational change (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Madsen et al., 2005; Oreg, 2006). The present study contributes to organizational change literature by examining the thus far unexplored mediating role of trust and organizational commitment in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and an employee’s variable attitude towards organizational change.

In the next part the study's central concepts, i.e. psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change are explained, followed by the variables trust and organizational commitment that are expected to mediate the central relationship. After presenting the results of the analyses, limitations of the study and recommendations for future change research are described. Additionally, implications for practitioners are discussed and a stronger focus on psychological contract management and all three dimensions of attitude towards change is suggested as an effective new approach to managing the increasing amount of organizational change.

4.2 Psychological contract fulfillment

Psychological contract theory has become a central framework for understanding the employment relationship (Guest, 2004; Taylor & Tekleab, 2004). The psychological contract comprises individual beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1990). In line with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), perceived imbalances in the psychological contract can result in various work-related outcomes, since the employee will attempt to restore balance in the exchange relationship. Empirical research has demonstrated that a breach of the psychological contract results in increased employee turnover (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003) and intention to quit (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003), as well as in decreased commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000), extra-role behaviors (Turnley & Feldman, 2000) and trust (Robinson, 1996). These examples stress the importance of maintaining good psychological contracts with employees. Although in most studies an imbalance of the psychological contract has been conceptualized as a breach or violation, an increasing number of studies are adopting the term 'fulfillment' (e.g., Ho & Levesque, 2005). We opt for the latter conceptualization, since this term, contrary to breach and violation, captures "both breach (under-fulfillment) and over-fulfillment of psychological contract obligations" (Lester, Kickul, & Bergmann, 2007, p. 199).

The psychological contract encompasses the perceived obligations of the organization as well as obligations on the part of the employee. Although by far most psychological contract research focuses on the fulfillment of organizational obligations, it is important and worthwhile to also consider the employee-side of the psychological contract. The perception of employees that they have fulfilled their promises to the organization and perhaps even demonstrated extra-role behavior might very well foster organizational commitment. However, empirical proof of the work-related outcomes of the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract is lacking.

Numerous theoretical and empirical studies have demonstrated the influence of the state of the psychological contract, i.e. whether promises and obligations are met (Guest & Conway, 2002), on work-related outcomes. Although empirical research on the influence of psychological contract fulfillment on employee responses to organizational change is scarce, there is some theoretical argumentation. For example, Rousseau (2003) emphasized "the critical role that schemas play in

psychological contracting as sources of stability, adaptation, and resistance to change” (p. 233). Indeed, it can be argued that investments in the psychological contract might pay off in times of organizational change. Fulfillment of the psychological contract could create some sort of an emotional bank-account, a buffer, which prevents perceived imbalances from causing immediate negative responses as soon as the status quo is distorted. Consequently, this buffer could enable the organization to respond adequately to the initial individual perceptions, which are perhaps based on incomplete information, rumors or announcements in the media. But it could also prevent employees from reacting in an uncontrolled manner, driven by their primary feelings and thoughts. Well-fulfilled psychological contracts could therefore result in a more positive attitude towards organizational change.

4.3 Attitude towards change

The attitude of employees towards organizational change determines the success of change implementation to a large extent (Jones, Jimmieson, & Griffiths, 2005; Oreg et al., 2011). Insight in these change attitudes therefore helps change agents and management to design and manage organizational change in an effective and successful manner. For decades, researchers have attempted to properly conceptualize the responses to organizational changes, resulting in a wide range of negative conceptualizations such as resistance to change (e.g., Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008) and cynicism about change (e.g., Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnysky, 2005) as well as positive conceptualizations such as openness to change (e.g., Wanberg & Banas, 2000), readiness for change (e.g., Holt et al., 2007), acceptance of change (e.g., Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006) and commitment to change (e.g., Chen & Wang, 2007). The debate on the appropriate terminology to represent employee responses to organizational change is made even more confusing by the fact that the term ‘resistance to change’ is used to refer to either (1) a personality trait (Oreg, 2003) that, because of its dispositional character, is relatively stable over time, or to (2) a variable attitude towards a specific organizational change (Oreg, 2006). However, in line with Oreg (2006) and Oreg et al. (2011), the present study considers dispositional resistance to change as a pre-change antecedent of the variable attitude to a specific organizational change. Furthermore, according to Bouckennooghe (2010) the meanings, labels and definitions of the various constructs that are used to represent employee responses to change are used interchangeably and in essence refer to attitude towards change. Moreover, conceptualizing the response of an employee to organizational change as either a positive or negative construct complicates any operationalization of the concept, since it then by definition neglects the potential opposite response. An absence of resistance, for example, does not automatically imply that an employee is enthusiastic about a change or is proactively contributing to the change. Therefore, the neutral concept of ‘attitude towards change’ can be considered more appropriate, since it can capture both positive and negative responses to a change.

Following Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), an attitude can be seen as a three-dimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. Piderit (2000), who applied this framework to re-conceptualize individual responses to change, emphasized that a focus on only one of these components at the expense of the others is likely to be incomplete. Several studies have already adopted this perspective (e.g., Vakola, Tsaousis, & Nikolaou, 2004; Lines, 2005). Yousef (2000) and Oreg (2006) measured and analyzed the components of the tridimensional construct separately. In line with this development and based on the definition presented by Bouckennooghe (2010), the present study conceptualizes attitude towards change as a tridimensional state composed of affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change. Here, the affective dimension of attitude towards change concerns the individual's feelings, moods and emotions about an organizational change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006). The behavioral dimension includes an employee's actions or intentions to act in response to an organizational change (Oreg, 2006). The cognitive dimension represents an employee's evaluative thoughts and beliefs about a change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006).

4.4 Trust

Trust lies at the heart of the employment relationship (Guest, 2004). It can be described as one's "expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 238). There is empirical support for the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and trust. Robinson and Rousseau (1994), for example, found in a study among 128 graduate management alumni that a violation of the psychological contract was negatively related to trust. Robinson (1996) conducted a longitudinal survey study among 125 newly hired managers. The results showed that initial trust was negatively related to psychological contract breach after eighteen months of employment, and that the decrease of trust as a result of a breach was considerably higher among employees with low initial trust compared to employees with high initial trust. The findings also pointed out that trust mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach and employees' subsequent contributions to the organization. The study by Robinson (1996) illustrates that trust can be considered a consequence of the psychological contract.

Concerning the distinction between the organization-side and the employee-side of the psychological contract, it makes no sense to assume that a well-fulfilled employee-side of the psychological contract results in more trust in the organization and its representatives. On the other hand, if these organizational representatives contribute to the fulfillment of their obligations as perceived by the employee, this contributes to the employee's trust in the organization. We therefore expect the fulfillment of the organization-side to be positively related to trust (Guest, 2004).

Every organizational change is, at least to a certain extent, characterized by a gap between what change recipients know about the change process and its

consequences, and what they would like to know. There are also practical constraints in terms of communicating full information, the difficulty of segmenting information and communication to various target groups, and the problem that management often doesn't know or isn't able to predict all details and consequences of a change. This creates uncertainty (Morrison & Robinson, 1997) which increases the chance of a negative response to organizational change. Trust, however, influences the primary appraisal of organizational change and facilitates a more constructive response to organizational change, because it reduces the extent to which the change is evaluated as a threat (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). Empirical research supports this. For example, in a study among 501 nurses Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) applied social accounts theory and motivated reasoning theory to explain how nurses interpreted the reasons of the organization to undertake a change. Trust was found to relate negatively to beliefs in dysfunctional reasons for the change, and positively to economic and quality reasons. The results also demonstrated that nurses with high trust in management perceived the change as more legitimate than nurses with low trust in management. Devos, Buelens and Bouckennooghe (2007) found that in a situation of poor organizational change history, higher levels of employee trust in executive management resulted in substantially more openness to organizational change. In a study by Ertürk (2008), trust in one's supervisor fully mediated the relationship between managerial communication and openness to change. However, most of these studies focused on the relationship between trust and either an affective, a behavioral or a cognitive responses to change. An exception is Oreg's (2006) study on the multifaceted construct of resistance to change. He found that trust in management was negatively related to all three dimensions of resistance to change and concluded that a "lack of faith in the organization's leadership was strongly related to increased reports of anger, frustration, and anxiety with respect to the change, to increased actions against it, and in particular to negative evaluations of the need for, and value of, the organizational change" (p. 93). In line with Oreg's (2006) findings, we expect that trust is positively related to all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct.

There is limited empirical evidence for the mediating role of trust between psychological contract fulfillment and outcomes (Guest, 2004). Clinton and Guest (2004) found that trust mediated the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and commitment as well as the intention to quit. However, since there is a considerable amount of research that identifies trust as an outcome of psychological contract fulfillment as well as research that identifies trust as an antecedent of employee responses to organizational change, we expect trust to mediate the relationship between these two variables.

Hypothesis 1: Trust mediates the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change, in a way that (1) the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract is positively related to trust and (2) trust is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change.

4.5 Organizational commitment

Although organizational commitment has been interpreted as an affective, an attitudinal, a normative and a calculative concept, it is most commonly viewed as “an individual’s attitudes and feelings towards his or her employing organization” (Mathews & Shepherd, 2002, p. 369). The present study therefore regards organizational commitment as an affective attitude that represents the emotional attachment of the employee to an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Although the conceptualization of organizational commitment is an ongoing debate, identification, involvement and loyalty are commonly perceived to be the main components of the multidimensional organizational commitment construct (Fenton-O’Creedy, Winfrow, Lydka, & Morris, 1997). The inclusion of these three components reflects the early influential work of Buchanan (1974) and Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). The present study adds the loyalty component to Steers’s (1977) definition and conceptualizes organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual’s identification with, involvement in and loyalty to a particular organization.

Numerous studies have been devoted to identifying antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment (Zheng, Sharan, & Wei, 2010). In various studies, a negative relationship between a breach of the organization-side of the psychological contract and organizational commitment was found (e.g., Lester et al., 2002; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003; Cassar & Briner, 2011). Likewise, this study expects that the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract results in stronger identification with, involvement in and loyalty to the organization. It is therefore expected that the fulfillment of both the organization-side and the employee-side of the psychological contract are positively related to organizational commitment.

There is some evidence that commitment mediates the relationship between the psychological contract and work-related outcomes. Restubog, Bordia and Tang (2006) for example found that affective commitment mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach and self-reported as well as supervisor-rated civic virtue. Additionally, in a longitudinal study by Ng, Feldman and Lam (2010) organizational commitment mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach and innovative-related behaviors. However, no prior studies have investigated the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards organizational change. As there is empirical evidence that organizational commitment influences reactions of employees to organizational change, and because most empirical studies indicate that higher organizational commitment leads to a more positive response to organizational change (e.g., Madsen et al., 2005; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2003), the present study expects organizational commitment to be positively related to an employee’s attitude to change. Since organizational commitment is an affect that represents the emotional attachment of the employee to an organization, we expect organizational commitment to be related to the affective dimension of the attitude towards change construct. Therefore we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change, in a way that (1) the fulfillment of both the employee- and organization-side of the psychological contract are positively related to organizational commitment and (2) organizational commitment is positively related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change.

Figure 1 depicts the model and hypotheses of the study.

4.6 Method

4.6.1 Procedure and participants

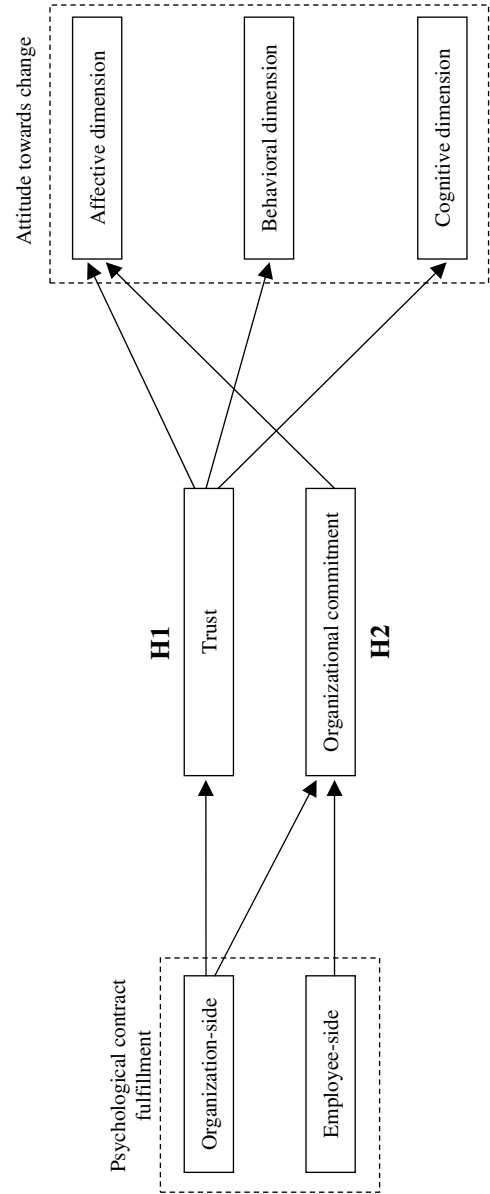
The study was conducted at three divisions of a large Dutch health insurance organization. The organization was undergoing substantial organizational changes as a result of mergers and integrations of brands. This resulted in a restructuring of departments and changes in job content, with a concomitant demand for flexibility and autonomy. Data were gathered via an electronic survey. On account of the variety of changes occurring at the same time, respondents were asked to identify a specific change as target for the ‘attitude towards change’ questions. More specifically, respondents were asked to keep in mind a change that occurred in the recent past or that was taking place at the moment of the survey. A total of 517 respondents were invited by e-mail to participate in the survey. The e-mail included the link to the survey, instructions on how to complete the survey and information concerning the anonymity of the survey. After one week, the initial e-mail was followed by a reminder e-mail. A total of 197 surveys were returned, which means a response rate of 38%. The final sample consisted of 147 males and 50 females. The average age was 41.97 (s.d. = 9.98), 78% cohabited with a partner, 22% was single and the highest degree of education attained was low secondary education for 24%, high secondary education for 72% and tertiary education for 4% of the respondents. The mean years of tenure was 13.9 (s.d. = 10.30).

4.6.2 Measurements

For all variables that were included in the survey, a 5-point scale ranging from ‘totally disagree’ (1) to ‘totally agree’ (5) was used.

Psychological contract fulfillment. The items used to measure psychological contract fulfillment were based on the scale developed in the Psycones (2006) research. For the organization-side of the psychological contract, the respondents were presented with fourteen potential obligations of the organization. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that the organization had lived up to obligations such as providing ‘interesting work’, ‘a good working atmosphere’, ‘flexibility in matching demands of non-work roles with work’ and ‘reasonable job security’. For the employee-side of the psychological contract, the respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed that they

FIGURE 1
Theoretical model with hypotheses of the study



themselves had lived up to their obligations. Sixteen obligations such as ‘assist others with their work’, ‘volunteer to do tasks outside of your job description’, ‘develop new skills and improve your current skills’, ‘respect the rules and regulations of the company’ and ‘show loyalty to the organization’ were presented. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s Alpha) for both the fulfillment of the organization-side and the employee-side of the psychological contract were .90.

Trust. Trust was measured with Robinson’s (1996) scale consisting of seven items, which are ‘I believe my employer has high integrity’, ‘I can expect my employer to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion’, ‘My employer is not always honest and truthful’, ‘In general, I believe my employer’s motives and intentions are good’, ‘I don’t think my employer treats me fairly’, ‘My employer is open and upfront with me’ and ‘I am not sure I fully trust my employer’. The scale’s reliability was .85.

Organizational commitment. Cook and Wall’s (1980) British Organizational Commitment Scale (BOCS) formed the basis for the scale used in the present study to measure the respondents’ organizational commitment. As suggested by Mathews and Shepherd (2002), a selection of the positive items was made, which resulted in the inclusion of the items ‘I am quite proud to be able to tell people that I work for (organization name)’, ‘I feel myself to be a part of (organization name)’, ‘To know that my own work had made a contribution to the good of the organization would please me’, ‘In my work I like to feel that I am making some effort not just for myself, but for the organization as well’ and ‘Even if (organization name) were not doing too well financially, I would be reluctant to change to another employer’. The reliability coefficient of the organizational commitment scale was .77.

Attitude towards change. The three-dimensional attitude towards change construct was measured with the scale developed by Oreg (2006). The affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions were represented by 5 items each. Examples of items measuring the affective dimension are ‘I was afraid of the change’ and ‘I had a bad feeling about the change’. The behavioral dimension of attitude towards change was measured with items such as ‘I looked for ways to prevent the change from taking place’ and ‘I complained about the change to my colleagues’. Examples of items that served to measure the cognitive dimension of the construct are ‘I thought that it’s a negative thing that we were going through this change’ and ‘I believed that the change would make my job harder’.

As the example items show, the attitude towards change questions were phrased in past tense. The retrospective nature of these questions potentially raises issues concerning whether such a variable can be regarded as a consequence rather than a predictor of other variables that are assessed with items phrased in present tense. Oreg (2006) as well acknowledges this potential issue. However, he states that despite of the retrospective nature of the attitude towards change questions, interviews conducted prior to the administration of the questionnaires indicated that the change was still very much underway, and employee experiences were therefore still fresh in mind. To prevent retrospective issues from occurring in the present study, the respondents were explicitly requested to keep in mind a change that occurred in the recent past or that was taking place at the moment of the survey.

To improve the reliability of the affective and cognitive subscale, the third and eleventh item of the original scale were excluded from further analyses. This

resulted in reliability coefficients of the affective, behavioral and cognitive subscale of respectively .89, .88 and .62.

4.7 Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables included in the study.

To test the hypothesized model, structural equation modeling (SEM) with IBM SPSS Amos 19 software was used. The results of these analyses are presented in Figure 2.

Both the standardized regression weights and the coefficients of determination are shown. Analyses demonstrated a good fit of the model with the empirical data (Chi square = 8.19, d.f. = 9, $p = .515$; RMR = .012, GFI = .988, AGFI = .962, TLI = 1.003, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000).

Hypothesis 1 suggested that trust would mediate the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change, in a way that (1) the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract would be positively related to trust and (2) trust would be positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change. This hypothesis was fully supported. First of all, the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was positively related to trust ($\beta = .65$, $p < .001$). A considerable amount of 42% of the variance in trust was explained by the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract. Thus, the more the employee perceives that the organization fulfills its promises, the greater the employee's trust in the employer. Secondly, trust was positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change. The greater the trust of the employee in the employer, the more positive the employee's affective ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$), behavioral ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$) and cognitive ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) attitude towards change.

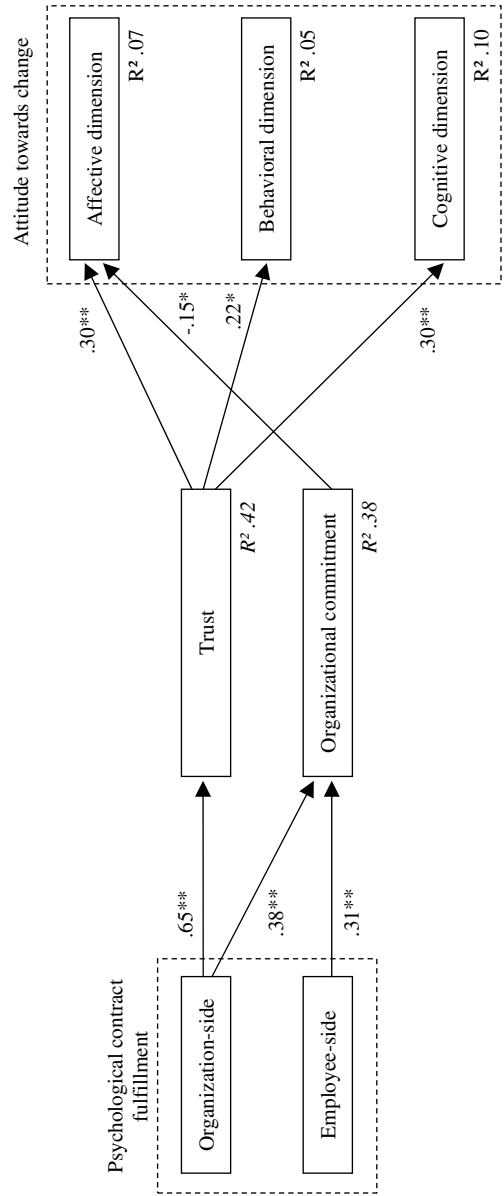
Hypothesis 2 predicted that organizational commitment would mediate the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change, in a way that (1) the fulfillment of both the employee- and organization-side of the psychological contract would be positively related to organizational commitment and (2) organizational commitment would be positively related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change. First of all, the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was positively related to organizational commitment ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), meaning that this fulfillment not only results in more trust in the employer, but also in more organizational commitment among employees. Secondly, the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract was positively related to organizational commitment ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$). This means that the more an employee perceives that he has fulfilled his obligations to the organization, the more committed this employee is. Together, the fulfillment of the organization-side and the employee-side of the psychological contract explained 38% of the variance in organizational commitment. Thirdly, although organizational commitment was significantly related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change, the relationship was negative ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$).

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in the study (N = 197)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Psychological contract fulfillment (organization-side)	4.09	0.43	1						
2. Psychological contract fulfillment (employee-side)	3.68	0.52	.628**	1					
3. Trust	3.97	0.60	.649**	.474**	1				
4. Organizational commitment	3.75	0.60	.569**	.550**	.463**	1			
5. Attitude towards change (affective dimension)	3.40	0.92	.156*	.081	.221**	-.006	1		
6. Attitude towards change (behavioral dimension)	3.49	0.85	.237**	.102	.216**	.121*	.700**	1	
7. Attitude towards change (cognitive dimension)	3.19	0.69	.261**	.134*	.303**	.140*	.551**	.629**	1

Note. *p < .05 (one-tailed) **p < .01 (one-tailed).

FIGURE 2
SEM path model results (* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$)



while a positive relationship was expected. Thus, the stronger the employee's organizational commitment, the more negative the employee's affective component of attitude towards change. In sum, although organizational commitment was found to mediate the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective dimension of attitude towards change, organizational commitment was negatively related to attitude towards change, and hypothesis 2 was therefore rejected.

4.8 Discussion

This study examined the mediating role of trust and organizational commitment on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards organizational change. Both the employee-side and the organization-side of the psychological contract were considered, and attitude towards change was conceptualized and operationalized as a multidimensional construct with an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive attitude dimension. The results support the mediating role of trust between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct. The better the organization had fulfilled its promises in the perception of the employee, the higher the trust of the employee in the employer and the more positive the consequent attitude towards organizational change. Commitment mediated the relationship between the fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract and the affective dimension of attitude towards change. However, contrary to what was expected, organizational commitment was negatively related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change. Thus, a better fulfillment of the organization or employee-side of the psychological contract resulted in more organizational commitment of the employee, which in turn resulted in a more negative affective attitude towards change. Since there is substantial empirical evidence that organizational commitment is positively related to the responses of employees to organizational change, an explanation for this unexpected negative relationship might be found in the attitude object under study, i.e. the type of organizational change. Assuming that "committed employees have a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values" (Mathews & Shepherd, 2002, p. 369), it could be argued that changes that have impactful individual consequences, like changes in daily tasks or work location, hinder employees from considering the benefits for the department or organization as a whole. In such a situation, personal interests could override organizational interests. In a survey among 953 employees of three hospitals that were about to merge, Van Dam (2005) for example also found a negative relationship between affective commitment and the attitude towards job changes, such as change in job content, change of department and change of location. Furthermore, Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009) found that a change in job tasks was significantly related to affective resistance to the change. In the present study, the participants could choose the organizational change for which they answered the attitude towards change questions, instead of being asked to complete questions concerning a predetermined organizational change. An open question in

the survey asked to describe the organizational change selected. Most of the answers referred to changes with considerable personal or individual impact, such as the termination of the opportunity to work at home, compulsory redundancy as a result of a merger, or the implementation of work schedules imposed by a system and the supervisor. A recommendation for future research would be to either measure the attitude towards a single predetermined organizational change, or to measure additional characteristics of a change that is chosen by the respondent. In the latter case, insight into for example the type of change (see e.g. the classification by McNamara, 2006, into organization-wide vs. subsystem change, transformational vs. incremental change, remedial vs. developmental change and unplanned vs. planned changes), the extent of the change, and the individual job impact (see for both concepts Caldwell, Herold, & Fedor, 2004), would be valuable.

The results of the present study have theoretical implications for research on psychological contract fulfillment and attitude to change. As a consequence of the increasing necessity for organizations in today's world to quickly implement organizational changes in order to retain its competitive advantage, "promises and deals made in good faith one day may be broken the next" (Guest, 2004, p. 543). The study heeded Guest's (2004) call to give greater weight to the context of the employment relationship and the state of the psychological contract by incorporating trust. A solid mutual trust in the exchange relationship between employee and employer seems to be gaining in importance, since organizational contexts are increasingly characterized by change and rapid (technological) developments. Research on the mediating role of organizational commitment and trust on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change is therefore valuable, especially because in times of change, the likelihood that a reevaluation of the psychological contract results in a breach of the psychological contract is higher than in stable periods. Although this research has made a considerable contribution in this respect, the relatively low coefficients of determination for the affective (.07), behavioral (.05) and cognitive dimension (.10) of the attitude towards change construct demonstrate that more research is needed. Oreg (2006), who included two control variables and seven independent variables, was for example able to explain 43, 30 and 47 percent of the variance of respectively the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension. The inclusion of additional relevant independent variables, such as information about the change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000) and individual inclination to resist changes (Oreg, 2003), would be helpful.

Another contribution of this study to research on organizational change is that it focuses on the individual change recipient's response to an organizational change, while most of the work on organizational change aims to explain how organizations prepare for and respond to organizational change (Oreg et al., 2011). Additionally, there is too little attention in literature for the variety of experiences among the change recipients, in particular because there is "no reason to assume recipients and change agents share the same understandings" (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006, p. 183) of an organizational change. In order to gain more insight into the wide variety of potential responses to change, the usage of the multidimensional attitude towards change construct can prove very valuable. It can help researchers to acquire insight into the thoughts and feelings of employees

regarding the change, which might be even more important than the visible behaviors of employees. Moreover, it would be highly valuable to gain insight into the relative development of all three dimensions of the construct during organizational transformations. This is particularly so since an important limitation of the present study is that, because of its cross-sectional character, causality of the relationships cannot be proven. Although the hypothesized directions of the relationships were based on previous empirical findings, certain relationships could just as well be the result of an opposite causal relationship. For example, it could be hypothesized that an employee's positive attitude towards change actually causes trust and organizational commitment. Longitudinal research on attitude towards change, with measurements before a widespread announcement of the change, during the change and after the change, is recommended. It would give researchers more insight into the attitudinal prerequisites for successful organizational change and it would contribute to an understanding of how feelings, behaviors and thoughts influence each other and in which order they tend to appear. Thus, more insight into the multidimensional attitude towards change construct helps us avoid iceberg-metaphor related fallacies by paying attention to the less visible though highly important responses to organizational change. Furthermore, thorough longitudinal research on the construct among various professional levels and in various organizational contexts would also help researchers to segment responses to change into employee groups, such as high-potentials, elderly employees, supervisors and support staff. It could for example be hypothesized that talented young professionals with high market value who perceive a psychological contract breach are more likely to show behavioral responses in terms of organizational change (e.g., by complaining or changing job), compared to elderly and highly loyal employees, who aim to stay with the organization until retirement. Segmentation of the workforce and recognition of the variety in employees' potential attitudes towards organizational change will consequently demand a tailored communication, change management and leadership approach during organizational changes.

Finally, the study has important implications for practitioners in the area of human resources and change management. First of all, the study points out that fostering trust by living up to perceived promises contributes to constructive responses to organizational change, and thus to the successful implementation of organizational change. Obviously, a certain amount of trust is required to facilitate the exchange relationship between an employee and the organization. However, for organizations embedded in dynamic and rapidly changing environments, a substantially higher degree of trust might be required to carry out more or more impactful organizational changes. In these contexts, a culture that values trust and delivery on promises seems to be of crucial importance. A continuous monitoring of expectations on mutual exchanges, or at least contact at regular intervals to enable employees to redefine or adjust implicit promises, is needed. Too often the yearly performance appraisal interview is the only moment when supervisors and employees discuss their mutual delivery on promises and their expectations for the coming period. A continuous dialogue between the employee and his or her supervisor can help prevent breaches of the psychological contract, thus preventing the erosion of trust and facilitating positive attitudes towards organizational change.

Secondly, this study highlights the dimensionality of an employee's attitude towards change. Managers are inclined to assume that if they hear no complaints, and there are no obvious signals of obstruction, employees perceive changes as positive. This might be the case, of course. However, the feelings and thoughts of employees concerning the change objectives and the change process are more difficult to observe than behavior. By only considering the observable responses of employees to the changes, managers construe an incomplete picture of the employees' attitude towards the change, especially since the dimensions can be ambivalent (Piderit, 2000). For example, employees may expect to benefit from the change personally, but still feel worried about the consequences for their colleagues or the organization as a whole. Or an employee may ventilate his concerns about the change to management, but still feel excited about it. In the latter situation, the behavioral response can be well-intentioned and be meant as constructive feedback on the change process. Regarding such behavior as resistance would therefore be incorrect. Gaining insight into the three dimensions of employees' attitude towards change, either through surveys, interviews or a simple dialogue, can therefore help change managers to effectively design and manage organizational change.

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5 Does a well-informed employee have a more positive attitude towards change? The mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change

Based on: Van den Heuvel, S., & Schalk, R. (Submitted). Does a well-informed employee have a more positive attitude towards change? The mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change.

Abstract

This study examined the mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change in the relationship between change information and employee attitude towards organizational change. As one of the first studies in organizational change research, attitude towards change was operationalized here as a tridimensional construct, comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive dimension. In a sample of 399 primarily German, Dutch and English employees, data were gathered using questionnaires. The results confirmed that psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change mediated the relationship between change information and attitude towards change. Change information was positively related to all three mediating variables, which in turn were positively related to attitude towards change. Although trust was only found to be related to the cognitive dimension of the attitude towards change construct, psychological contract fulfillment and perceived need for change were significantly related to all three dimensions. Recommendations for future research and implications for practitioners are discussed.

5.1 Introduction

One of the key reasons why organizational transformations fail is that communication is insufficient, incomplete, or that information is incorrect (Kotter, 1995; Mishra, 1996). Employees who receive or have access to an adequate amount of useful information about the organizational change experience less uncertainty (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991) and less psychological strain (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2004), and are more open to the organizational change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Axtell, Wall, Stride, Pepper, Clegg, Gardner, & Bolden, 2002). However, research on the relationship between change information and the multidimensional construct of attitude toward change, comprising an affective, behavioral and cognitive component, is scarce (for an exception, see Oreg, 2006).

There are also empirical hints that change information influences psychological contract fulfillment (e.g., Freese, 2007), trust (e.g., Paterson & Cary, 2002), and perceived need for change (e.g., Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993), and that these variables are in turn related to how employees respond to organizational change (e.g., Van den Heuvel & Schalk, 2009; Oreg, 2006; Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts, Walker, 2007). However, no prior study has explored the mediating role of these variables in the relationship between change information and attitude towards change. The present study contributes to this largely unexplored area of research by examining the mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change in the relationship between change information and the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of the attitude towards change construct.

The following section discusses the two central variables of the study, attitude towards change and change information. After that we will expound on the empirical support for the mediating role of psychological fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change. After presenting the results, recommendations for future research on

attitudes towards change and its antecedents will be made and suggestions for an adjusted perspective on organizational change management are provided.

5.2 Attitude towards organizational change

The responses of employees to organizational changes have found to be strong predictors of work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction (e.g., Rafferty & Griffin, 2006), intention to quit (e.g., Johnson, Bernhagen, Miller, & Allen, 1996) and organizational commitment (Martin, Jones, & Callan, 2005). Insight into these responses therefore helps organizational leadership and change agents to distill valid concerns and constructive feedback about the change outcome or the change process, which subsequently helps them to properly manage and improve the organizational change (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). Previous studies have often labeled employee responses to organizational change as resistance (e.g., Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008), openness (e.g., Wanberg & Banas, 2000) or readiness (e.g., Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007). However, in line with the work of Piderit (2000), the present study conceptualizes the responses of employees to organizational change as a multidimensional attitude, comprising an affective, behavioral and cognitive component. This more neutral conceptualization not only recognizes that an employee's affective, behavioral and cognitive responses can be ambivalent (Piderit, 2000, p. 787), but it also considers the change response as a continuum which can range from negative to positive. A conceptualization in terms of resistance, for example, does not consider potential positive responses to organizational change but merely an absence of resistance, thus the absence of a negative response. And absence of resistance does not necessarily imply enthusiasm.

Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) conducted a review of quantitative empirical studies on change recipients' reactions to organizational change that were published between 1948 and 2007. They found only in a few studies that all three attitude components (i.e. affective, behavioral and cognitive) were measured, and that the study performed by Oreg (2006) was the only one that explicitly aimed to measure all three components separately. One explanation for this lack of empirical research on the three-dimensional construct proposed by Piderit (2000) could be the absence of a valid and reliable measurement for the multidimensional change attitude construct. Oreg (2006) was among the first to develop, test and use such a scale. Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009) later adopted this multidimensional scale to study the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective, behavioral and cognitive response to change in Dutch organizations. The present study contributes to the research on change recipients' responses to organizational change by conceptualizing and operationalizing attitude towards change as a multidimensional construct.

5.3 Information in times of organizational change

The success of organizational change heavily depends on an organization's internal communication (Pundzienė, Alonderienė, & Buožiūtė, 2007). A lack of information creates uncertainty among individuals (Rousseau, 1996) because they cannot accurately predict the effects of organizational changes (Milliken, 1987). Although most practitioners are aware of this, it remains an enormous challenge for change agents to provide the information desired by the change recipients on time, with a sufficient level of detail, through appealing communication channels and in a way that it answers the most pressing questions of each individual employee. Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) note that although organizational changes prompt an increase in the individual's need for information, the availability of information often declines during change processes, causing employees to make "greater efforts to gather information and interpret events, typically through reliance on informal sources" (p. 525). Moreover, it was found that informal communication is just as important as the formal information provided by management, since it enhances the exchange of ideas, involvement and awareness which are prerequisite for successful organizational change (Yazici, 2002). Thus, a good communication climate in terms of both formal and informal information increases employees' readiness for change (Holt et al., 2007). There are several empirically grounded communication principles that increase the likelihood of successful organizational change. Thus, face to face communication, communication by direct supervisors, communication of personally relevant information and the usage of multiple media channels have been proven to be more effective than abstract, general and impersonal information provided by non-hierarchical change agents and/or through a single medium (Klein, 1996). However, a single 'success-guaranteed' or 'one-size-fits-all' guideline on which information should be provided to employees and what is the most efficient and effective way to do so does not exist. It cannot even exist, as every organizational change requires a tailored change management and communication approach, depending on the organizational context, the organizational culture, the change culture and the characteristics of the workforce. Moreover, every individual employee will have a different need for information. In line with the work of Wanberg and Banas (2000), change information is therefore conceptualized here as the extent to which the employee perceives that information about the change is received in time, is useful and is adequate in that it satisfies his or her questions about the change.

5.4 The mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment

This study expects three variables to mediate the relationship between change information and attitude towards organizational change. First of all, this study expects that proper change information results in a more positive evaluation of the psychological contract, which subsequently causes a more positive affective, behavioral and cognitive response to the organization change. The psychological contract can be defined as an individual's belief about mutual obligations, in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, 1990). These obligations arise out of perceived promises (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998), and when applying social exchange theory (Blau, 1994) on which psychological contract theory is based, the employee expects the organization to live up to its promises in return for the contributions that the employee made to the organization. However, a lack of trustworthy information about an organizational change creates rumors and uncertainty (Schweiger & DeNisi 1991), which makes an employee uncertain whether the organization is willing or able to live up to promises made previously in the employment relationship. A breach of the psychological contract is likely to be the result. Indeed, in her longitudinal research on psychological contracts in times of organizational change, Freese (2007) found that psychological contracts are susceptible to breaches during organizational changes. Moreover, the results of her research showed that employees who received clear information about the organizational change evaluated their psychological contract more positively. Additionally, Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) found that the nature of psychological contracts played an important role in the change recipients' perception of the legitimacy of the change. Employees who held a more transactional contract, as compared to a more relational contract, were less willing to accept poorly justified organizational change. Thus, providing adequate and trustworthy information during an organizational change can prevent a breach of the psychological contract which in turn causes more positive responses to organizational change. It is therefore hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: Psychological contract fulfillment mediates the relationship between change information and attitude towards change, in a way that change information is positively related to psychological contract fulfillment and that psychological contract fulfillment is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change.

5.5 The mediating role of perceived need for change

The second variable which is expected to mediate the relationship between change information and attitude towards change is the employee's perceived need

for change. The employee's perception of the necessity of an organizational change has been conceptualized in various ways. While the term 'burning platform' is often used among practitioners (Armenakis et al., 2007), Armenakis et al. (1993) labeled the belief that a change is needed as the perceived discrepancy between a present state and a desired end-state. They noted that the message concerning the change is the primary mechanism for creating readiness to change. Change information that aims to create a sense of urgency should therefore be consistent with relevant contextual factors such as increasing competition, changing legislation and economic circumstances (Armenakis et al., 1993). Obviously, management should be the first to perceive a need for change. Milliken (1987) for example suggested that failures to properly align organizations to the changing environment are likely to be caused by organizational administrators who fail to see that an environmental change poses a considerable threat to their organization. But even if top management feels a sense of urgency about initiating an organizational change, this does not necessarily mean that individual employees are aware of, understand and/or agree with this sense of urgency.

Additional support for the existence of the relationship between change information and perceived need for change can be found in social accounts research, which focuses on how "a particular source of information regarding reasons, typically the managers involved in implementing change, shapes perceptions of adequacy or legitimacy of reasons" (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999, p. 521). It is often hard for managers to get these reasons across to employees, because causal accounts (i.e., reasons to motivate complex organizational change) are not always accepted, understood or received in the way managers intend, even if the organizational change is for the benefit of employees (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). It is interesting to note that well-performing organizations are particularly challenged to keep up with a changing environment, because successful organizations are often characterized by inertia (Miller, 1993). An explanation for this inertia is that "successful organizations discard practices, people, and structures regarded as peripheral to success and grow more inattentive to signals that suggest the need for change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 369).

Thus, when employees perceive a sense of urgency, it is more likely that they will evaluate the change more positively, since maintaining the status quo is seen as less favorable for their own position or that of their colleagues or the organization. This underlines the importance of proper change information to help employees understand the rationale behind and the necessity of the change in order to facilitate a positive response to the change. It is therefore postulated that:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived need for change mediates the relationship between change information and attitude towards change, in a way that change information is positively related to perceived need for change and that perceived need for change is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change.

5.6 The mediating role of trust

Trust is the third variable which is expected to mediate the relationship between change information and attitude towards change. Trust can be defined as an individual's "beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 238). When considering the influence of change information on an employee's trust in the organization and its representatives, Mishra (1996) noted that undistorted communication from trusted persons reinforces trust in them, while trust decreases if the other party lies or communicates a distorted version of the truth. Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the change thus creates mistrust and diminishes the credibility of the ones in charge of the change. The availability of "rich information channels, conveying both bad news and any other relevant information in a timely way" (Rousseau, 1996, p. 55) therefore helps to maintain trust.

Trust is not only found to be of considerable importance when attempting to explain employee responses to organizational change (see e.g., Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007); there is also empirical support for the mediating role of trust in the relationship between change information or communication and employees' responses to change. Armenakis et al. (1993), studying change agents' intervention opportunities in social information processing in times of organizational change, identified persuasive communication and the management of external sources of information as powerful influence strategies to increase the readiness to change among employees. They also found that the effectiveness of these influencing strategies depended on the credibility and trustworthiness of the change agents who made the attempts to influence the processing of information. Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) stressed the importance of providing consistent information from credible sources during a change process, especially given the central role that trust plays in perceiving the communicated reasons for the change as being legitimate. Additionally, in a study among 750 employees at two healthcare organizations, Albrecht (2010) found that change information was positively related to trust in senior management, which in turn was negatively related to employee cynicism towards change. And Ertürk (2008), who conducted a survey study among 878 employees employed by public organizations in Turkey, demonstrated that the trust of an employee in one's supervisor fully mediated the relationship between managerial communication and openness to change. However, no prior study has investigated the mediating role of trust in the relationship between change information and the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct. Since theoretical hints for the existence of this relationship are present, this study expects that:

Hypothesis 3a: Trust mediates the relationship between change information and attitude towards change, in a way that change information is positively related to trust and that trust is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change.

As stated before, this study also assesses the influence of psychological contract fulfillment on the relationship between change information and attitude towards change. Given that psychological contract theory is based on exchange theory (Blau, 1994) and on the assumption that “individual employees feel obligated to make particular contributions in exchange for particular benefits” (Schalk & Roe, 2007), trust plays an important role in psychological contracts. After all, without a certain amount of trust that the other party will fulfill its reciprocal obligations, an employee isn’t likely to engage in the exchange relationship at all. Trust can therefore be expected to influence the evaluation of the psychological contract. Indeed, in a longitudinal study on the role of trust in relation to psychological contract breach, Robinson (1996) found that trust influences the likelihood of a psychological contract breach in that higher initial trust in an employer was negatively related to psychological contract breach later on in the employment relationship. An explanation for this relationship was given by Schalk and Roe (2007), who noted that employment relations that are characterized by high levels of trust are likely to have broad zones of change acceptance. It is therefore hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3b: Trust is positively related to psychological contract fulfillment.

Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) argued from a motivated reasoning perspective that employees with high trust in management will perceive the reasons for change as more legitimate than employees with low trust in management. The results of their survey study, which was conducted among 501 nurses, supported this presupposition. Additionally, trust was found to be negatively related to beliefs in dysfunctional reasons for change and positively related to economic and quality reasons. An explanation for these findings is that trust in the organization and its representatives increases the employee’s “willingness to pay attention to managerial communications so the message is received”, and it facilitates the “believability of explanations that otherwise might appear to be imprecise, unclear, or confusing” (p. 525). These results indicate that trust influences the sense-making process in times of organizational change, and it is therefore postulated that:

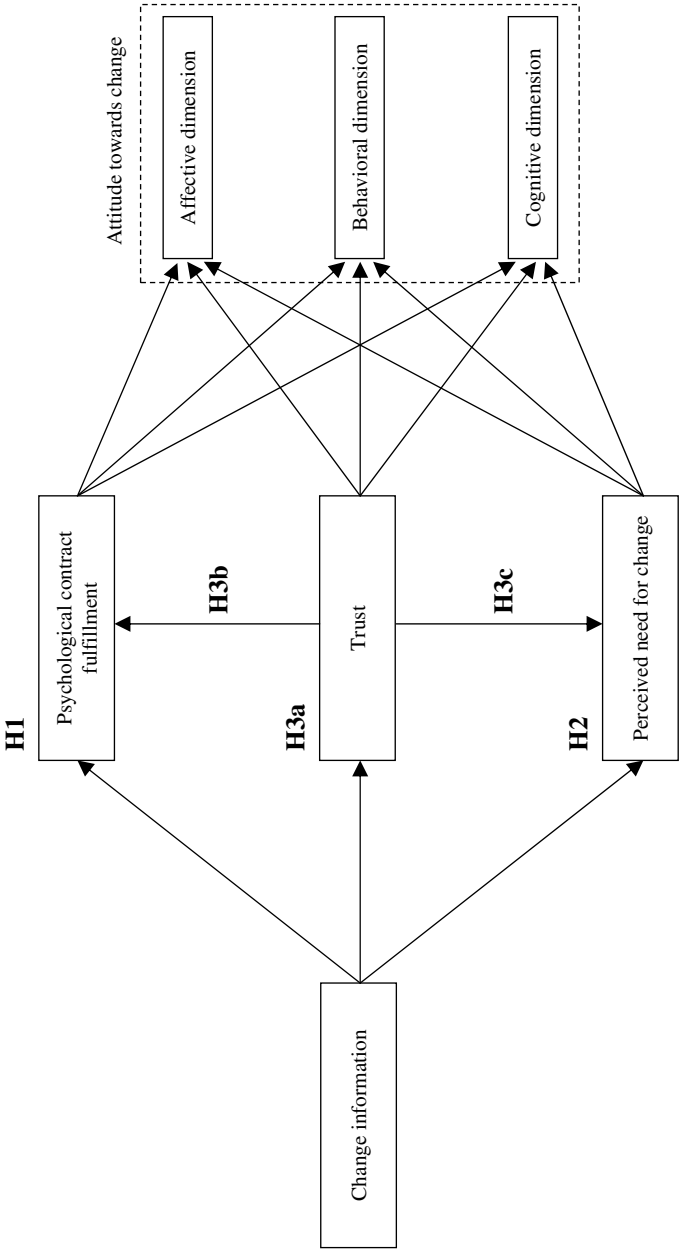
Hypothesis 3c: Trust is positively related to perceived need for change.

5.7 Method

5.7.1 Procedure

The present study used an exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling approach. Initially, 150 persons employed in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were invited by e-mail to participate in an anonymous study. They were invited to fill in a survey and to forward the survey link to people in their network who had a paid job and were not self-employed. After four weeks, a total of 399 respondents had completed the survey.

FIGURE 1
Theoretical model with hypotheses of the study



5.7.2 Translations

The survey was available in German, Dutch and English. The original 'trust' items, which were derived from the international Psycones (2006) research, were already available in all three languages and the 'psychological contract fulfillment' items derived from the Tilburg Psychological Contract Questionnaire (Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2008) were available in Dutch and English. However, the items for the variables 'change information' (Wanberg & Banas, 2000) and 'attitude towards change' (Oreg, 2006) were only available in English, and the items to measure 'perceived need for change' were self-developed in English. Native Dutch speaking and native German speaking graduate students of Tilburg University translated the original English items of the scales into respectively Dutch and German. Subsequently the translations were reviewed by other graduate students as well as staff of the department of HR studies at Tilburg University. The reviewed versions of the translations were included in the final survey. At the start of the survey, respondents were asked in all three languages to select the preferred language for the remainder of the survey. Of the 399 respondents, 73% selected the German version, 18% selected the Dutch version and 9% selected the English version.

5.7.3 Participants

The sample consisted of 176 males and 223 females. The average age was 36.53 (s.d. = 11.52). Concerning the family situation, 33% was single or living as a single, 57% was married or cohabiting and 10% was living with family, parents or friends. The highest degree of education attained was primary or low secondary education for 6%, high secondary education for 37% and tertiary education for 57% of the respondents.

Skilled and unskilled blue collar workers represented 11% of the sample. A majority of 80% consisted of white collar workers (lower level white collar workers 15%, intermediate white collar workers or white collar supervisors 35%, upper white collar worker, middle management or executive staff 30%). Managers and directors represented 9%.

The sample included 22 different nationalities, although most respondents were German (71%), Dutch (19%) or English (4%). In line with these numbers, the majority of the employees were employed in Germany (70%), followed by the Netherlands (20%) and the United Kingdom (4%). Twenty-four employees were working in 19 other countries across the world.

5.7.4 Measurements

Since a snowball sampling method was used, no single organizational change could be selected for which the change-related items could be answered. Before answering the 'change information', 'perceived need for change' and 'attitude towards change' questions, the respondents were therefore asked to keep in mind the

most important organizational change that was either taking place at that moment or that would take place in the near future.

Change information. The four items used to measure the information about the change were based on Wanberg and Banas' (2000) adjusted version of the original information scale developed by Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994). The four items for which the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed were 'the information I have received about the change was timely', 'the information I have received about the change was useful', 'the information I have received has adequately answered my questions about the change' and 'I have received adequate information about the change'. A five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used. The scale's reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was .86.

Psychological contract fulfillment. The fulfillment of organizational obligations in the psychological contract was measured with a scale developed by Freese et al. (2008). The scale consisted of six dimensions, namely job content, career development, social atmosphere, organization policies, work-life balance and rewards. Per dimension, four related items were presented for which the respondents needed to indicate the extent to which they considered their employer to be obliged to offer these aspects. 'Variation in work' was for example mentioned for the dimension job content, 'training and education' for career development, 'appreciation and recognition' for social atmosphere, 'clear and fair rules and regulations' for organization policies, 'adjustment of working hours to fit personal life' for work-life balance, and 'good benefit package' for the dimension rewards. The main purpose of these items was to properly frame each dimension. After each set of 4 items, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their employer had fulfilled its obligations regarding the particular dimension. For the six fulfillment questions a five-point scale was used, ranging from 'much less than expected' (1) to 'much more than expected' (5). The average of the six fulfillment scores was included in the analyses. The reliability coefficient of the scale was .80.

Trust. The items to measure trust were derived from Psycones (2006). The three items of the scale were 'to what extent do you trust senior management to look after your best interests?', 'in general, how much do you trust your organization to keep its promises or commitments to you and other employees?' and 'to what extent do you trust your immediate line manager to look after your best interests?'. A five-point scale ranging from 'not at all' (1) to 'to a great extent' (5) was used, and the scale's reliability was .84.

Perceived need for change. To measure the perceived need for change, four items were developed. The scale comprised the items 'I believe this change is needed', 'there is no urgency to do this change', 'this change is necessary' and 'it is clear to me why we need this change'. A five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used. Because the second item was phrased negatively, it was reverse coded. The scale's reliability was .89.

Attitude towards change. Oreg's (2006) change attitude scale was used to measure the attitude of employees towards organizational change. Oreg assessed the change attitude of employees after the modification of an organizational structure following a merger of the two core units within the particular organization. Interviews with company managers and employees prior to the survey that sought to

better understand the change context indicated that, although the actual change had already occurred, the experiences of the change were still fresh in mind. Accordingly, the items of the scale were phrased in the past tense; e.g., 'I was afraid of the change'. To avoid issues concerning the retrospective nature of the original change attitude scale, the present study rephrased all original items into the present tense. Each dimension of the attitude towards change scale contained five items. Examples of items measuring the affective dimension are 'I am afraid of the change' and 'I have a bad feeling about the change'. The items 'I look for ways to prevent the change from taking place' and 'I complain about the change to my colleagues' are examples for the behavioral dimension. Finally, two items included in the cognitive subscale are 'I think that it's a negative thing that we are going through this change' and 'I believe that the change will make my job harder'. Since Oreg conceptualized the change attitude as resistance to change, he reverse coded the positively phrased items of the scale for further analyses (i.e. items 3, 10, 14 and 15 of the original scale presented in Oreg, 2006). However, since the present study intends to heed Piderit's (2000, p. 789) call to "retire the phrase resistance to change" and to contribute to "a new wave of research on employee responses to change, conceptualized as multidimensional", we find that the negatively phrased items of the original scale (i.e. all items except item 3, 10, 14 and 15) should be reverse coded, rather than the positively phrased items. As a result, a higher score indicates a more positive attitude towards change. A five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used and the reliability coefficients of the affective, behavioral and cognitive subscale were respectively .81, .76 and .84, which is comparable to reliability scores of respectively .78, .77 and .86 as found in Oreg's study.

5.8 Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations for the seven variables included in the study are presented in Table 1. The hypotheses presented earlier were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) with IBM SPSS Amos 19 software. Figure 2 presents the results of these analyses. Although all possible relations between change information and the mediating variables as well as between the mediating variables and attitude towards change were tested, only the standardized regression weights that turned out to be significant are reported. Furthermore, the coefficients of determination for the mediating and dependent variables are presented. Analyses demonstrated of good fit of the model with the empirical data (Chi square = 7.79, d.f. = 4, $p = .099$; RMR = .012, GFI = .994, AGFI = .961, TLI = .984, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .049).

Hypothesis 1, which suggested that psychological contract fulfillment would mediate the relationship between change information and attitude towards change, was fully supported. Change information was positively related to psychological contract fulfillment ($\beta = .18$, $p < .001$) and psychological contract fulfillment in its turn was positively related to the affective ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$), the behavioral ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$) and the cognitive dimension ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$) of the attitude towards

change construct. Thus, the better the change information (i.e. useful, timely, adequate and responsive to questions held by the employee), the more the employee perceives that the organization kept its promises, and the more positive the employee's attitude towards the organizational change.

Hypothesis 2 postulated that the perceived need for change mediated the relationship between change information and employees' attitude towards change. Change information was indeed positively related to the employees' perceived need for change ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) and perceived need for change was positively related to the affective ($\beta = .41, p < .001$), behavioral ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) and cognitive dimension ($\beta = .58, p < .001$) of attitude towards change. The second hypothesis was therefore fully supported, which implies that the better the information regarding the change, the more the employee perceives that the change is needed and the more positive his affective, behavioral and cognitive response to the attitude object is.

Hypothesis 3a, which suggested that trust mediated the relationship between change information and attitude towards change, was only confirmed for the cognitive dimension of the attitude towards change construct. Thus, although change information was significantly related to trust ($\beta = .54, p < .001$), trust was only found to be related to the cognitive dimension of attitude towards change ($\beta = .14, p < .01$). This implies that the better the information regarding the change is, the more the employee trusts his employer, and the more positive his beliefs regarding the organizational change are.

Hypothesis 3b, which assumed that trust would be positively related to psychological contract fulfillment, was confirmed ($\beta = .18, p < .001$). Thus, the more employees trust their organization and its representatives, the more they perceive that the organization kept its promises to them. Concerning the mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, these results imply that psychological contract fulfillment mediates the relationship between change information and attitude towards change directly as well as indirectly via trust. Together, change information and trust explain 45% of the variance in the fulfillment of the psychological contract.

Hypothesis 3c expected trust to be positively related to the perceived need for change. The hypothesis was confirmed ($\beta = .20, p < .001$), meaning that the more employees trust their organization and its representatives, the more they perceive the organizational change is needed. As a result, perceived need for change mediates the relationship between change information and attitude towards change directly, but also indirectly via trust. Change information and trust explain 21% of the variance in the employee's perceived need for change.

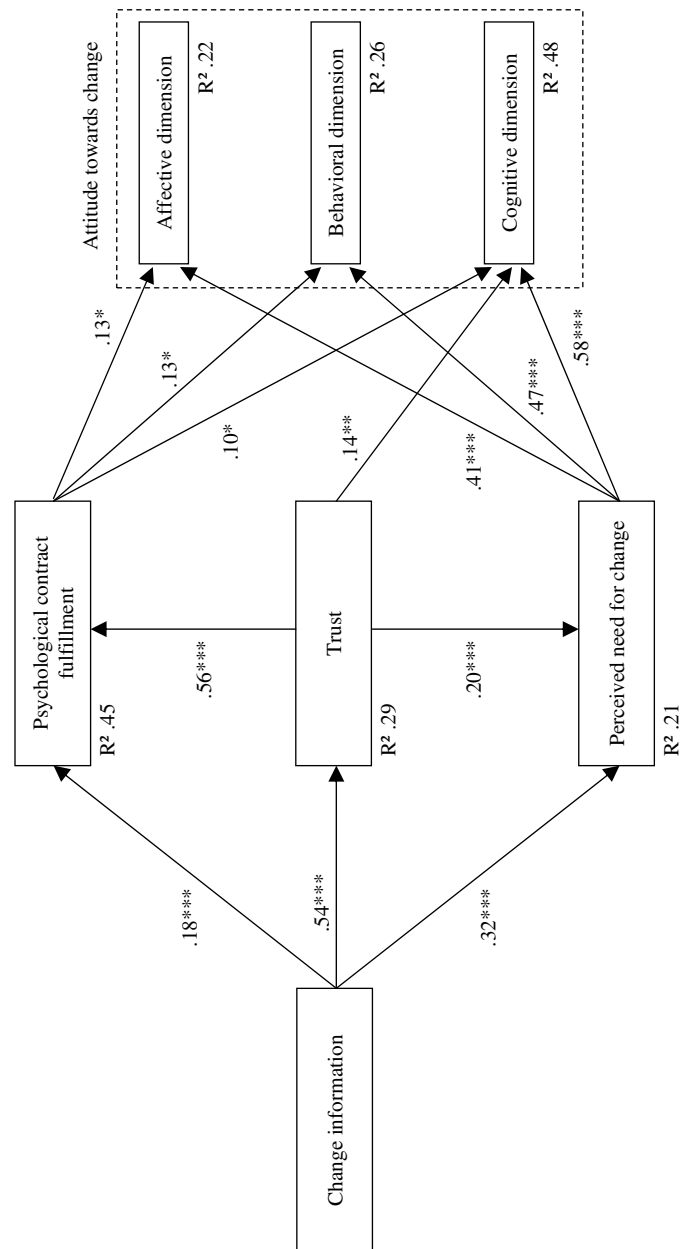
Together, psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change explained 22% of the variance in the affective dimension, 26% of the behavioral dimension and 48% of the cognitive dimension of the attitude towards change construct.

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in the study (N = 399)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Change information	3.20	.76	1						
2. Psychological contract fulfillment	2.95	.58	.480**	1					
3. Trust	3.28	.85	.536**	.653**	1				
4. Need for change	3.45	.80	.426**	.277**	.369**	1			
5. Attitude towards change (affective dimension)	3.60	.71	.304**	.246**	.237**	.445**	1		
6. Attitude towards change (behavioral dimension)	3.59	.70	.297**	.244**	.232**	.497**	.675**	1	
7. Attitude towards change (cognitive dimension)	3.40	.76	.446**	.352**	.418**	.659**	.610**	.634**	1

Note. **p < .01 (one-tailed).

FIGURE 2
SEM path model results (* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$)



5.9 Discussion

This study examined the mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change in the relationship between change information and attitude towards change. The results confirmed that change information is positively related to all three mediating variables; thus, the more useful, timely and adequate the information about the change, the more fulfilled the psychological contract, the higher the trust and the higher the perceived need for change. All three mediating variables were in turn positively related to attitude towards change. Psychological contract fulfillment and perceived need for change were significantly related to all three dimensions of attitude towards change, i.e. the affective, behavioral and the cognitive dimension. Trust, however, was only significantly related to the cognitive dimension of attitude towards change.

The present study has considerable theoretical implications for research on psychological contract fulfillment and attitude to change. First of all, as one of the first in the field of work and organization psychology, this study empirically demonstrates the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees towards organizational change. Although the large amount of empirical research on the outcomes of psychological contract breach and fulfillment has concentrated on affective reactions, work attitudes and work behaviors such as mistrust, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turn-over (intentions) and OCB (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007), research on attitudinal responses to change as an outcome of psychological contract fulfillment is scarce. In most studies organizational change is considered as an antecedent of changes in the psychological contract (e.g., Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2011; Schalk & Roe, 2007). However, as the results of this study show, a well-fulfilled psychological contract contributes to positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change. We therefore recommend to further investigate this relationship in various organizational contexts and during different types of organizational changes.

The second theoretical contribution of the study concerns its conceptualization and operationalization of attitude towards change as a multidimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. The focus has long been on behavior as the primary indicator of how an employee evaluates an organizational change. Affective and cognitive responses to change have been neglected or studied separately from each other. However, to focus on only one of these dimensions to assess an employee's response to organizational change seems incomplete (Piderit, 2000). For example, positive or neutral behavioral responses to organizational change do not necessarily imply that an employee thinks positively about a change or is bursting with enthusiasm. One explanation for the lack of research on attitude towards change as a multifaceted construct is that a reliable and validated scale to measure the concept was lacking until recently. Oreg (2006) was among the first to develop a three-dimensional attitude towards change scale. Although the added value of considering attitude towards change is being recognized more and more, extensive testing of Oreg's scale in various organizational settings and changes has yet to be performed. A recommendation

would therefore be to further assess the dimensionality of the attitude towards change concept as well as Oreg's change attitude scale and to produce and test translations of the scale.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the understanding of how change information influences employees' responses to organizational change. A number of studies have assessed this either direct (e.g., Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Oreg, 2006) or indirect (Armenakis et al., 1993) relationship. However, no prior study has empirically investigated the mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment. Especially interesting in this respect is the important role that trust plays in the model. Not only was trust found to mediate the relationship between change information and the cognitive dimension of attitude change, but it was also significantly related to the fulfillment of the psychological contract and the perceived need for change. Together, change information and trust explained almost half the variance in psychological contract fulfillment, and twenty-one percent of the variance in the perceived need for change. This underlines the importance of change information and trust in the sense-making process during organizational changes. Trust, which can be enhanced by proper information about the change, helps to create a sense of urgency among employees and serves as an emotional buffer preventing a breach of the psychological contract as a primary and impulsive response to an organizational change.

A limitation of this research is its cross-sectional design, which prohibits us from determining causality in the significant relations that were found between the variables. A recommendation for future research is therefore to conduct longitudinal research on the attitude towards change and the variables that are expected to influence this attitude. Such research would not only enable researchers to make claims regarding the causality of relationships; it would also yield insight into how the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of the attitude construct develop over the course of an organizational change, and how these dimensions might influence each other. Furthermore, the influence of the amount and quality of change information as well as the way change information is communicated and by whom should be explored further in a longitudinal setting. Linking measurements to important communication moments, like Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) did, will help to understand how initial information provision, compared to communication during and after the change, can influence employees' attitudes towards change. Moreover, longitudinal research will help to understand how pre-change perceptions of the employment relationship influence the change attitude during and after organizational change. This could reveal important prerequisites for successful organizational change. The results of the present study suggest that a certain amount of trust and fulfillment of the psychological contract is one of these prerequisites.

Finally, this research has important implications for practitioners involved in organizational change management and human resource management. First of all, recognition of attitude towards change as a multidimensional construct will impact the way change management and communication approaches are designed and executed. Behavioral responses, whether positive or negative, are not the sole indicators of how well the change is absorbed by employees, because clearly observable behavioral responses are not necessarily in line with less well observable affective and cognitive responses. This emphasizes the importance of more

individually-oriented and bi-directional communication and change management approaches that aim to obtain insight into the underlying feelings and thoughts of employees about the change. Obviously, an employee can be hesitant to share feelings and thoughts, especially if these are negative or contrary to what colleagues and managers feel or think. Personalized bi-directional communication with trustworthy and independent organizational or external agents is likely to be more effective in exposing sincere feelings and thoughts about the change than primarily one-way communication performed by hierarchical managers. However, in order for an organization to benefit from more comprehensive knowledge about employees' feelings, behaviors and thoughts about the change, the organizational mindset should learn to treat critical perspectives as constructive feedback to the change, rather than as obstruction or resistance. Constructive feedback should be adequately and decisively acted on by management and change agents. It would be a start to not ignore it but to use it as input for communication with the employees.

Another implication for practitioners is related to the importance of knowing what factors make employees respond to an organizational change in a positive, a critical or a negative way. Primarily as a result of advanced technology, the degree of organizational change has increased significantly in the last decades, requiring organizations to be more flexible and better able to respond quickly to environmental changes in order to gain or preserve their competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). In rapidly changing environments, managing the psychological contract and maintaining high levels of trust is a major challenge, which makes it even harder for change agents and business leaders to successfully manage organizational changes. Insight into which antecedents most significantly determine the feelings, behaviors and thoughts of employees is therefore important. In their review, Oreg et al. (2011) found a large amount of antecedents of change recipients' reactions to organizational change, which they categorized into 'change recipient characteristics', 'internal context', 'change process', 'perceived benefit/harm', and 'change content'. This variety of responses illustrates the difficulty for practitioners to concentrate on the variables that have the highest predictive value for the employee's attitude towards change and therefore for the successful implementation of an organizational change. In the present research, psychological contract fulfillment, trust and perceived need for change accounted for a respectable 22%, 26% and 48% of the variance in the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change. When subsequently considering the important role that the psychological contract and trust play in the regular employment relationship, organizations might want to rethink their common perspectives on how to assure successful implementation of organizational changes. Perhaps the primary focus on change-specific antecedents should shift to focus instead on antecedents concerning the general employment relationship, such as the psychological contract and trust. A constant focus on fulfilling the psychological contracts of employees and creating high levels of trust in the employment relationship – before, during and after organizational changes – might contribute substantially more to the success of organizational changes than any of the other commonly considered antecedents.

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5.10 References

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6 How change information influences attitudes towards change and turnover intention: the role of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment, and trust

Based on: Van den Heuvel, S., Freese, C., & Schalk, R. (Submitted). How change information influences attitudes towards change and turnover intention: the role of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment, and trust.

Abstract

This study examined the influence of the perceived quality of change information on change recipients' attitude towards change and turnover intention. Additionally, the mediating role of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust was assessed. Attitude towards change was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive dimension. In a technology services organization undergoing an organizational change process, questionnaire data of 669 employees were gathered. The results showed that change information was positively related to engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust, as well as to all three attitude towards change dimensions. Engagement and psychological contract fulfillment were positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions and negatively to turnover intention. Contrary to what was expected, trust did not influence attitude towards change but was negatively related to turnover intention. Implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed, as is the role of psychological contract management in cultivating engagement and positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change.

6.1 Introduction

Driven by technological advances, the world of work is accelerating and there is an increasing pervasiveness and urgency of change (Guest, 2004). "The frequency and severity of the various changes have a cumulative effect on individuals in the organization" (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007, p. 949), resulting in psychological uncertainty among the change recipients (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Business leaders and change agents should take account of the consequences of the increasing amount of organizational changes for the employment relationship. Organizational changes can no longer be considered as independent events, and a careful consideration of the internal context in which the organizational change occurs is therefore required to assure the success of change implementation (Herold et al., 2007).

When employment relationships are characterized by high levels of engagement and mutual trust, employees are more open to organizational change (Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007) and require less explanation of the reasons for the change (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). By contrast, if organizational leaders have a track record of psychological contract breach, the trust underlying the employment relationship will erode, causing employees to doubt whether the reasons for the change are well-intentioned and constructive (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999).

However, even if employment relationships are characterized by high levels of engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and mutual trust, it is crucial that employees going through the organizational change process receive adequate information that addresses the questions they have with regard to the change and the change process. Change information needs to be useful, timely and adequate to solicit positive responses to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Most research to date has focused on “the manner in which change was implemented” (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 31), and examined antecedents such as management support for the change, managerial change competence, participation of employees, and perceived procedural justice. Given the context of the increasing frequency of organizational changes, however, the assessment of the overall state of the employment relationship is likely to become a decisive determinant of employee responses to organizational change. According to social exchange theory, focusing on managing the general employment relationship is more likely to induce constructive responses to organizational change than primarily focusing on a particular change as an independent event. In his work on social behavior as an exchange, Homans (1958) explained that “persons that give much to others try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium to a balance in the exchanges” (p. 606). In stable relationships the likelihood of an imbalance in the exchange between an employee and the organization is smaller than in relationships that are subject to lots of changes. A healthy internal context, characterized by trust, engagement and delivery on promises, can put pressure on both parties to give much in return in times of change, which facilitates the continuation of the equilibrium in the exchange relationship. When an organizational change starts from a situation where there is a serious imbalance in the exchange relationship at the disadvantage of the employee, the organization first needs to overcome the gap and restore the equilibrium in social exchanges. This can pose a considerable challenge, especially during organizational change processes.

From a social exchange perspective it can also be argued that organizational changes provide an opportunity to strengthen the employment relationship. Since organizational change becomes a structural element in organizations’ DNA, the social exchange in contemporary employment relationships is characterized by risk and uncertainty about if and how the other party will restore the balance in the exchange. Persuasion in times of organizational change depends largely on implicit bargaining and non-binding deals, and especially under these conditions “the risk and uncertainty of exchange provide the opportunity for partners to demonstrate their trustworthiness”, (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000, p. 1396). The delivery on promises in times of change can thus create trust and cultivate engagement in the general employment relation. However, in this respect the quality of change information is key. One of the main reasons why organizational changes fail is inadequate communication (Kotter, 1995). Proper change information is therefore a prerequisite for constructive responses to organizational change among employees (Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

The present study intends to contribute to our understanding of social exchanges in the context of organizational change by examining how the quality of change information influences change recipients’ attitude towards change, and how the state of the general employment relationship (i.e. psychological contract fulfillment, engagement and trust) mediates this relationship. Additionally, the study examines how the state of the employment relationship and the change recipient’s attitude towards change influence an employee’s intention to turn over. The latter is especially relevant since the retention of key contributors during and after organizational change is becoming increasingly important for organizations in order

to remain their competitive advantage in labor markets that are characterized by scarcity and fierce competition for talented individuals.

6.2 Attitude towards change

According to Bouckennooghe (2010), scholarly articles on employee responses to change appeared from the late 1940s on, which conceptualized the responses in terms of resistance to change (Coch & French, 1948) or readiness to change (Jacobson, 1957). These conceptualizations mark the beginning of the still ongoing debate about whether responses to change should be conceptualized in either negative or positive terms. A range of positively and negatively phrased concepts has emerged thus far. However, the present study conceptualizes change recipients' responses to organizational change as an attitude, which is a more neutral label for responses and in addition has the potential to hold both negative and positive responses to the attitude object, i.e. an organizational change.

Early attitude literature already proposed considering an attitude as a multifaceted construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960), in which affect concerns feelings, behavior concerns actions or intentions to act, and cognition concerns thoughts and beliefs regarding the attitude object. Because a change recipient's feelings, behaviors and thoughts concerning a change are not necessarily in line with each other, Piderit (2000) advocated the adoption of this multidimensional attitude construct to represent an employee's responses to an organization change. This study adopts Piderit's (2000) perspective and defines attitude towards change as a tridimensional state composed of affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). The next section discusses the antecedents and the consequences of attitude towards change that are examined in the present study.

6.3 Antecedents of attitude towards change

For decades, business leaders and change agents have been interested in the determinants of employee responses to organizational changes. Bouckennooghe (2010), who reviewed attitude towards change literature published between 1993 and 2007, also considered the underlying drivers and determinants of change recipients' responses to change. He concluded that these antecedents could be clustered into three main categories, namely (1) the environment in which the change occurs, (2) the way the change is dealt with, and (3) the type of change. Put differently, the three categories concern the context, the process and the content of a change. Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) distinguished two additional categories after reviewing sixty years of quantitative literature on attitude towards change published before 2007. These categories relate to the characteristics of change recipients and the perceived benefit or harm caused by the change. Moreover, Oreg et al. (2011) made a higher-order distinction between pre-change antecedents and

change antecedents. *Pre-change antecedents* “constitute conditions that are independent of the organizational change that existed prior to the introduction of the change” (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 26). Pre-change antecedents include (1) change recipient characteristics and (2) internal context variables. *Change antecedents* on the other hand “involve aspects of the change itself, that influence change recipients’ explicit reactions” (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 26), and include variables relating to (3) the change process, (4) the perceived benefit or harm caused by the change, and (5) the change content. In the present study three pre-change antecedents (i.e. engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust) and one change antecedent (i.e. change information) are studied.

6.3.1 *Pre-change antecedents*

The first pre-change variable addressed by this study is engagement. Although the related and often interchangeably used (yet different) concept of organizational commitment has frequently been studied as an antecedent of employee responses to organizational change (see e.g. Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2003; Madsen, Miller, & John, 2005), empirical research on the influence of engagement on change recipients’ attitudes towards change is scarce. Engagement, which can be conceptualized as a positive work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli, Bakker, & van Rhenen, 2009), did not feature in the large-scale literature review conducted by Oreg et al. (2011). However, “work engagement has been shown to be contagious and may therefore be of special importance during change, as a counterforce for possible change cynicism” (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010, p. 136). Engaged workers go the extra mile (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010), and such organizational citizenship behavior, which contributes to the effective functioning of the organization but not necessarily to one’s individual performance or appraisal (Organ, 1988), may well be expected to carry much weight in times of organizational change. Engagement is therefore predicted to be positively related to attitude towards change.

The second pre-change variable is the fulfillment of the psychological contract. The psychological contract concerns an individual’s beliefs about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, 1990). Psychological contract fulfillment thus indicates the positive or negative discrepancy between what was perceived as being promised and what is actually offered, according to the employee. A vast amount of empirical research demonstrates that under-fulfillment (i.e. breach or violation) of the psychological contract results in negative affective, behavioral and cognitive work-related outcomes (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007), such as emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003), turnover (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005) and satisfaction (Sutton & Griffin, 2004). However, affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change as outcomes of psychological contract fulfillment are fairly unexplored. This study therefore examines whether psychological contract fulfillment indeed predicts positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change.

Trust, which is the third pre-change variable in this research, can be defined as one's "expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 238). Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999) found that trust in management was positively related to the perceived legitimacy of reasons for the change and, as demonstrated by Oreg (2006), trust in management is related to lower levels of affective, behavioral and cognitive resistance to a change. Additionally, Devos et al. (2007) found that trust in executive management as well as in the direct supervisor significantly contributed to the openness of employees to organizational change. This study therefore predicts that change recipients' trust in their organization and its representatives is positively related to an employee's attitude towards a specific organizational change.

Current quantitative research has primarily focused on intentional and behavioral responses to change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). A few studies have assessed two reaction components, namely affective and behavioral reactions. However, as demonstrated by Oreg et al. (2011), until 2007 only one study explicitly sought to measure all three dimensions of attitude towards change (see Oreg, 2006). By operationalizing attitude towards change as a multidimensional construct, the present study therefore contributes to the understanding of the complexity of employee responses to change. It is expected that:

Hypothesis 1: Engagement (H1a), psychological contract fulfillment (H1b) and trust (H1c) are positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change.

The perceived obligations that constitute the psychological contract are based on promises (Rousseau, 2001) that are made either explicitly or implicitly (Rousseau, 1989). Violations of perceived promises diminish the trust of employees in their employer (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson, 1996). Because trust lies at the heart of the employment relationship (Guest, 2004), the effects of an under-fulfillment of the psychological contract can be detrimental for the performance of individual employees, and thus for the organization as a whole. By contrast, psychological contract fulfillment may create commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) and employee satisfaction (Tekleab, et al., 2005). Although limited, there is also support for the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and engagement (Chambel & Oliveira-Cruz, 2010), so that the present study expects that:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological contract fulfillment is positively related to engagement (H2a) and trust (H2b).

6.3.2 Change antecedents

Unlike pre-change antecedents, change antecedents are related to a specific change. The most frequently studied change antecedents concern the change process (Oreg et al., 2011) and include variables such as participation, procedural justice, principal support and change management competency. Especially communication

and information appear to be important, since organizational changes often fail for lack of a sense of urgency and because the vision behind the change is insufficiently communicated (Kotter, 1995). Poor change communication gives rise to widespread rumors that reinforce resistance to the change (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2004). Following Wanberg and Banas (2000) who built on Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994), change information is conceptualized here as the extent to which the employee perceives that information about the change is timely, useful and adequate, and that it answers his or her questions about the change. There is empirical evidence that proper change information results in more openness to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Axtell, Wall, Stride, Pepper, Clegg, Gardner, & Bolden, 2002) and in less behavioral and cognitive resistance to change (Oreg, 2006). Because proper change information answers questions held by an individual employee and therefore reduces uncertainty (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991), this study expects that:

Hypothesis 3: Change information is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change (H3).

Organizational changes by definition alter the employment relationship to a certain extent. The manner in which a change is implemented is likely to impact the employee's general perceptions about the employment relationship, and thus to influence factors such as engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust. Indeed, Freese (2007) found that employees who received clear change information evaluated their psychological contract more positively than less well-informed employees. Likewise, "trust in another is reduced when that other engages in outright lying or distortions of the truth" (Mishra, 1996, p. 273). Change information is therefore expected to influence the three pre-change variables addressed in this study:

Hypothesis 4: Change information is positively related to engagement (H4a), psychological contract fulfillment (H4b) and trust (H4c).

6.4 Consequences of attitude towards change

In their review, Oreg et al. (2011) found a wide range of personal as well as work-related consequences of the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational change. After organizational commitment and job satisfaction, most studies have examined turnover or intention to leave the organization as consequences of an organizational change (Oreg et al., 2011). From a practical point of view, unwanted turnover is one of the most undesirable consequences of organizational change, primarily because of the high costs associated with replacement. As demonstrated by Dalessio, Silverman and Schuck (1986), turnover intention is often shown to precede actual turnover (Tekleab et al., 2005). The present study therefore adopts the concept of turnover intention, which is

conceptualized as “the subjective probability that an individual will leave his or her organization within a certain period of time” (Zhao et al., 2007, p. 651).

Factors such as commitment to change, coping behaviors (Cunningham, 2006) and uncertainty caused by the change (Bordia et al. 2004; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006) determine an employee’s intention to turn over. Furthermore, Fried, Tieg, Naughton and Ashforth (1996) found in a study among middle-level managers whose organization was acquired through hostile takeover that psychological withdrawal resulted in intentions to leave the organization. Oreg (2006), who assessed the work-related consequences of all three dimension of change attitude, demonstrated that behavioral resistance was positively related to intention to quit. Because turnover intention is found to be determined by affective, behavioral and cognitive factors, it is expected that:

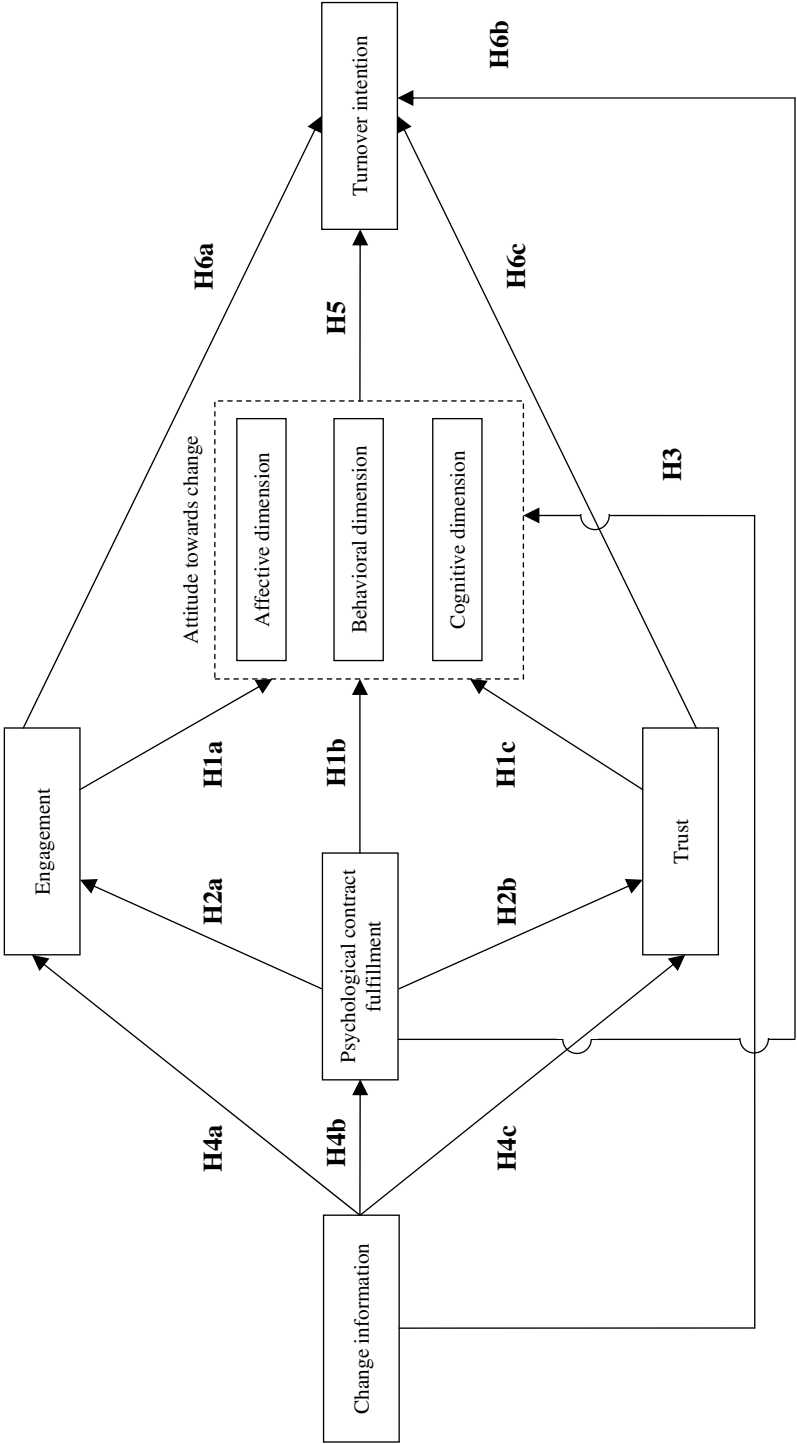
Hypothesis 5: The affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of attitude towards change are negatively related to turnover intention.

Obviously, pre-change variables such as engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust can influence an employee’s turnover intention as well. An organizational change or some other radical shift in the status quo of the employment relationship does not necessarily need to be the trigger to evoke turnover intentions. In a study among 1698 respondents from four independent samples, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a) found that engagement was negatively related to turnover intention, and recently Alarcon and Edwards (2011) demonstrated that the absorption dimension of engagement was negatively related to turnover intention. Additionally, a vast number of empirical studies demonstrate the positive relationship between psychological contract breach and turnover intention (Kickul, Lester, & Finkl, 2002; Sutton & Griffin, 2004; Collins, 2010). Trust has also been found to be related to turnover intention, either indirectly via organizational commitment (DeConinck, 2010) or unit commitment (Tremblay, 2010), or directly. In a study conducted in the US, Poland and Russia, trust was found to be directly and negatively related to turnover intentions. Interestingly, this relationship was stronger for trust in the CEO and top management than for trust in one’s supervisor (Costigan, Insinga, Berman, Kranas, & Kureshov, 2011). In line with these empirical findings, this study predicts that:

Hypothesis 6: Engagement (H6a), psychological contract fulfillment (H6b) and trust (H6c) are negatively related to turnover intention.

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized model of the study.

FIGURE 1
Theoretical model with hypotheses of the study



6.5 Method

6.5.1 *Organizational and change context*

The study was conducted at three divisions within the Dutch subsidiary of a multinational organization providing technology services. In this organization, most employees hold a Bachelor's or Master's degree and work for and often at the site of client organizations. At the time of the survey the organization was in the middle of a change towards a new way of working aimed at enabling employees to organize their work more flexibly, thereby creating a better fit with their individual situation. This flexibility primarily concerned the hours and the location at which the employees want to work. The change therefore sought to increase employees' autonomy by increasing management support and improving IT support to facilitate working at other locations (e.g. at home, at clients or at other establishments of the organization) or at hours outside of regular working hours (e.g. in the evening or weekends). The respondents were requested to keep this specific change in mind when answering the 'change information' and 'attitude towards change' questions.

6.5.2 *Procedure and participants*

In an e-mail from the internal communications department, a total of 3909 employees were invited to complete the online survey. After three weeks 669 respondents had completed the survey, which means a response rate of 17%. Although the survey was available in Dutch and English, the majority (95%) of the respondents opted for the Dutch version. The final sample consisted of 536 (80%) men and 133 (20%) women and the average age was 43.16 (s.d. = 9.54). Concerning the family situation, 18% of the respondents were single, 79% were married or cohabited and 3% lived with family, parents or friends. Almost 56% of the respondents had one or more children living at home. The mean tenure was 11.39 (s.d. = 8.79) and the average number of working hours was 38.37 (s.d. = 3.89).

6.5.3 *Measurements*

For all scales except the one to measure psychological contract fulfillment, a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used. All scales used in the survey were available in English beforehand. The scales for which no Dutch version was available were translated by a group of native Dutch speaking researchers in the field of HR studies.

Change information. The change information scale was based on Wanberg and Banas' (2000) scale and included the four items 'The information I have received about the change was timely', 'The information I have received about the change was useful', 'The information I have received has adequately answered my questions about the change' and 'I have received adequate information about the change'. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the change information scale was .93.

Engagement. To measure engagement, the shortened 9-item version of Schaufeli and Bakker's work engagement scale was used (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004b; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). The items included in the research were 'At my work, I feel bursting with energy', 'At my job, I feel strong and vigorous', 'I am enthusiastic about my job', 'My job inspires me', 'When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work', 'I feel happy when I am working intensely', 'I am proud of the work I do', 'I am immersed in my work' and 'I get carried away when I am working'. The reliability coefficient of the scale was .89.

Psychological contract fulfillment. To measure psychological contract fulfillment, the scale developed by Freese, Schalk and Croon (2008) was used. This scale consists of the six dimensions of job content, career development, social atmosphere, organization policies, work-life balance and rewards. Per dimension the respondents were presented with four potential organizational obligations, for which they needed to indicate to what extent they felt that their employer was obliged to offer these aspects. The main purpose of these items was to properly frame each dimension. After each set of items, the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the organization had fulfilled its obligations with regard to the particular dimension. This was done on a five-point scale, ranging from 'much less than expected' (1) to 'much more than expected' (5).

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess the one-dimensional composition of the psychological contract fulfillment construct on the 6 items (1 item per dimension). Analyses with SPSS AMOS 19, on a model in which the six error terms between the observed variables were assumed to be correlated, showed a good fit with the empirical data. The scores of .99 and .95 on the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), respectively, confirmed the six-dimensional structure of psychological contract fulfillment. The average of the six fulfillment scores was included in the analyses and the scale's reliability coefficient was .71.

Trust. The trust scale was based on Psycones (2006) and included the three items 'I trust senior management to look after my best interests', 'In general, I trust [organization] to keep its promises or commitments to me and other employees' and 'I trust my immediate line manager to look after my best interests'. The scale's reliability was .81.

Attitude towards change. To measure the three dimensions of attitude towards change Oreg's (2006) scale was used, which consisted of five items per dimension. The original items were rephrased into the present tense, which resulted in items such as 'I am afraid of the change' for the affective dimension, 'I look for ways to prevent the change from taking place' for the behavioral dimension, and 'I think that it's a negative thing that we are going through this change' for the cognitive dimension. All negatively phrased items were reverse coded, so that higher scores indicate a more positive attitude towards change.

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess the three-dimensional composition of the attitude towards change construct on the fifteen items (five items for each of the three dimensions). Analyses with SPSS Amos 19 on a model in which the three latent factors were assumed to be correlated (as well as error terms between the observed variables) demonstrated a satisfactory fit with the empirical data (CFI = .92; TLI = .88). These scores were comparable to the scores that Oreg

(2006) found in his pilot study (CFI = .92; TLI = .90) and the actual study he reported on (CFI = .93; TLI = .90). Additionally, a Chi Square Difference test was performed to determine whether the three-dimensional composition fitted the empirical data better than a uni-dimensional structure. The results ($X^2\Delta = 48.3$; $df \Delta = 3$) demonstrated a significantly ($p < .001$) better fit with the empirical data for the three-dimensional model, which justifies the adoption of the three-dimensional attitude towards change structure for further analyses. The reliability coefficients of the affective, behavioral and cognitive subscale were .86, .82 and .80 respectively.

Turnover intention. The scale to measure turnover intention was based on Freese (2007) and included the six items 'I plan to continue to work at [organization] until I retire', 'I often think about quitting', 'I intend to stay working at [organization] for the next few years', 'I am looking for an opportunity to find a job in another organization', 'I am actively searching for a job at another department within [organization]' and 'In the past three months I have applied for a job in another organization'. Items one and three were reverse coded. The reliability coefficient of the scale was .81.

6.6 Results

The descriptive statistics and inter-correlations of the eight variables included in the study are presented in Table 1.

The hypothesized model was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) with IBM SPSS Amos 19 software. Figure 2 displays the results of the analysis. Both the standardized regression weights and the coefficients of determination are shown. Only the paths that yielded significant results ($p < .05$) are presented, and for presentation purposes only a single path is drawn for each antecedent that was significantly related to all three dimensions of attitude towards change, including all three standardized regression weights.

The analyses demonstrated a very good fit of the model with the empirical data (Chi square = .365, d.f. = 1, $p = .546$; RMR = .002, GFI = 1.000, AGFI = .995, TLI = 1.010, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000).

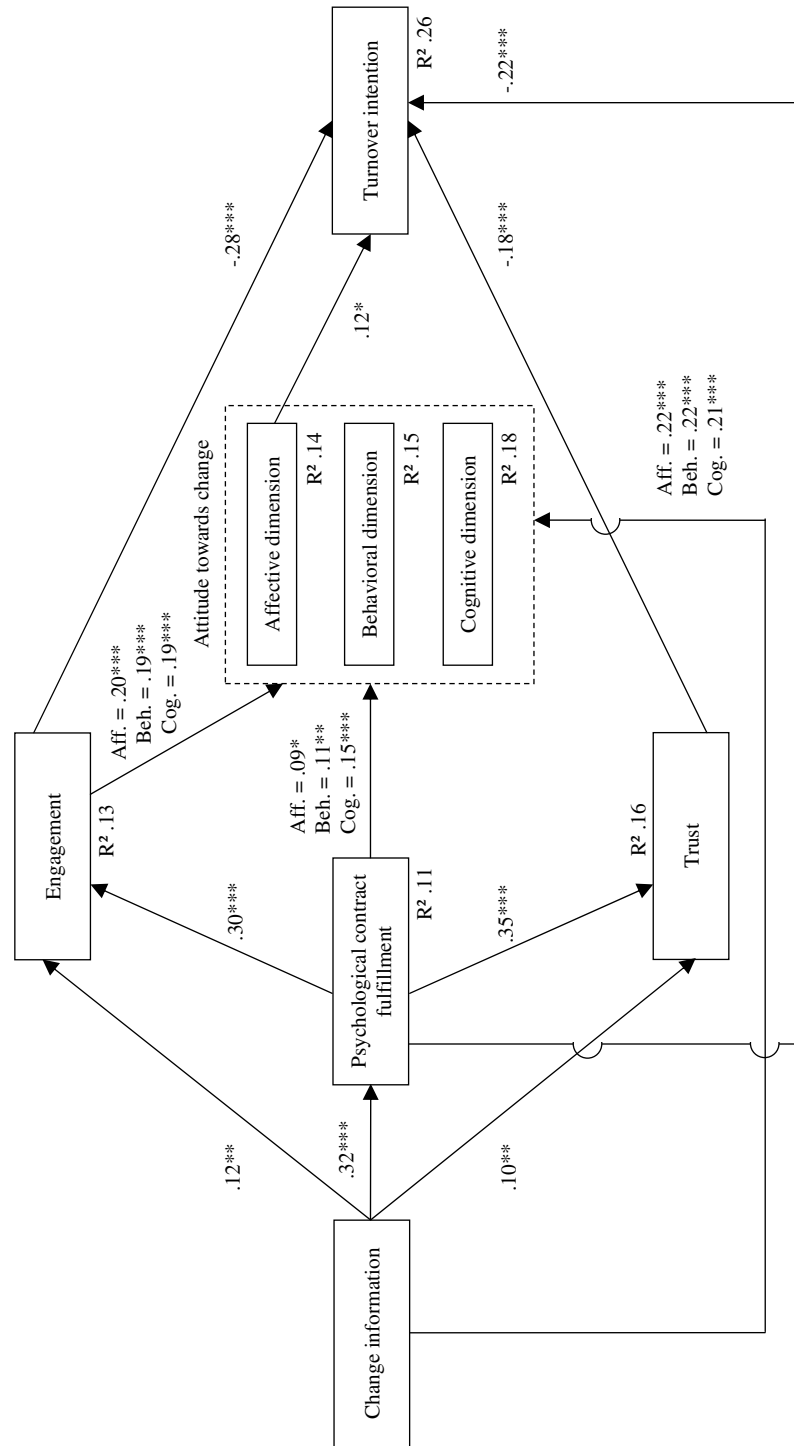
Hypothesis 1 suggested that engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust would be positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change. Although no support was found for the relationship between trust and attitude towards change, the hypothesis was fully accepted for the antecedents of engagement and psychological contract fulfillment. Higher levels of engagement were related to more positive affective ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$), behavioral ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$) and cognitive responses to change ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the better the psychological contract was fulfilled, the more positive the scores on the affective ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), behavioral ($\beta = .11$, $p < .01$) and cognitive ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$) dimension of attitude towards change were.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for the Variables in the Study (N = 669)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Change information	3.28	0.75	1							
2. Engagement	3.64	0.54	.214**	1						
3. Psychological contract fulfillment	2.69	0.47	.324**	.338**	1					
4. Trust	3.46	0.81	.216**	.266**	.384**	1				
5. Attitude towards change (affective dimension)	4.09	0.63	.293**	.280**	.229**	.144**	1			
6. Attitude towards change (behavioral dimension)	4.08	0.61	.300**	.285**	.259**	.171**	.777**	1		
7. Attitude towards change (cognitive dimension)	3.73	0.65	.314**	.301**	.306**	.209**	.724**	.714**	1	
8. Turnover intention	2.48	0.66	-.141**	-.393**	-.381**	-.340**	-.090**	-.141**	-.164**	1

Note. **p < .01 (one-tailed).

FIGURE 2
SEM path model results (* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$)



Hypothesis 2, which postulated that psychological contract fulfillment would be positively related to engagement and trust, was fully confirmed. The better the psychological contract of employees was fulfilled, the higher their engagement ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) and trust in the organization and its representatives ($\beta = .35, p < .001$) were.

Hypothesis 3 stated that change information would be positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change. This hypothesis was also confirmed. Thus, the better the change information (i.e. useful, timely, adequate and responsive to questions held by the employee), the more positive the employees' affective ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), behavioral ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) and cognitive responses ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) to the organizational change were.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that change information would be positively related to engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust. This hypothesis was fully supported. The better the change information, the higher the respondents' engagement ($\beta = .12, p < .001$), psychological contract fulfillment ($\beta = .32, p < .01$) and trust ($\beta = .10, p < .001$) were.

Hypothesis 5 expected the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change to be negatively related to turnover intention. A significant relationship with turnover intention was only found for the affective dimension of attitude towards change, but counter to expectations, this relationship was positive ($\beta = .12, p < .05$). The hypothesis is therefore fully rejected.

Finally, hypothesis 6 postulated that engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust would be negatively related to turnover intention. Indeed, higher levels of engagement ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$), psychological contract fulfillment ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$) and trust ($\beta = -.18, p < .001$) were related to lower levels of turnover intention. Hypothesis 6 is therefore fully confirmed.

6.7 Discussion

This study examined the influence of the perceived quality of change information on change recipients' attitude towards change and turnover intention. Additionally, the mediating role of the pre-change variables engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust was assessed. The attitude of employees towards organizational change was operationalized as a multidimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive dimension.

Although no relationship between trust and attitude towards change was found, the results demonstrated that engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and change information were directly and positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions. Research on the influence of engagement and psychological contract fulfillment on attitude towards change is scarce. A recommendation for future research therefore is to further explore these relationships while incorporating the affective, behavioral as well as cognitive responses of employees to organizational change.

In line with expectations, change information was found to be positively related to all three pre-change variables. Thus, the more useful, timely and adequate the

information about the change was in the perception of the employees, the higher their engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust.

In contrast with expectations, the results showed a positive relationship between the affective dimension of attitude towards change and turnover intention, although only marginally significant ($p = .031$). Moreover, no significant relationships were found between the behavioral and cognitive attitude towards change dimension and the respondents' turnover intentions. From a theoretical perspective these results are hard to explain. The change in question sought to enable employees to organize their work more flexibly, to thus create a better fit with their individual situation. Most likely, this organizational change did not have a big impact on the employment relationship and therefore did not considerably influence the employees' intentions to quit. By contrast, a merger that affects the core values of an organization and causes high levels of uncertainty as to whether one's position will become redundant is likely to cause stronger intentions to quit. This line of reasoning is also supported by the highly significant ($p < .001$) relationships between the pre-change variables and turnover intention. As expected, engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust were negatively related to turnover intention. Although the cross-sectional character of this research makes it impossible to determine causality in these significant relationships, which is an obvious limitation of this study, the results are a clear signal that variables relating to the general employment relationship might be more important than change-related variables in predicting one's responses to change. Future research on employee responses to organizational changes could therefore benefit from the simultaneous inclusion of both pre-change and change variables, rather than focusing only on the process variables that dominate today's research on antecedents of attitude towards change (Oreg et al., 2011).

Furthermore, future research in this field would benefit from longitudinal research designs. Such research would have the potential to confirm the causal relationships between the antecedents frequently found in cross-sectional research and the three attitude towards change dimensions. Moreover, longitudinal research could yield more insight into the complex relationship between pre-change and change antecedents and their joint influence on attitude towards change. For example, as this study indicates, adequate change information is positively related to the perceived fulfillment of the psychological contract. Yet the psychological contract and the level of engagement and trust can in turn be expected to influence the way change information is perceived and the extent to which such information is judged to be trustworthy and responsive to the questions held by the employee.

Another limitation of this study is that it solely relied on self-reported data. It would be interesting to assess the actual complaints voiced about the change in informal and formal settings to colleagues and management, for example through observation. Similarly, the actual turnover of employees as well as the frequency of communication about the change might provide valuable insights.

A final limitation of the study is that – although the conceptualization and operationalization of attitude towards change as a multi-dimensional construct is one of the strengths of this study – the multidimensional change attitude scale developed by Oreg (2006) has not yet been tested extensively. As shown by the confirmatory factor analyses of the present study as well as that performed by Oreg (2006), there is room for improvement in the measurement of the three-dimensional attitude

towards change construct. Examining Oreg's (2006) change attitude scale in various organizational contexts and during various types of organizational change would yield further insight into the reliability and validity of the scale. We would moreover encourage the development of new scales to measure all three attitude towards change dimensions simultaneously. Valid measurements would improve our understanding of how emotions, behaviors and thoughts differ from each other in times of organizational change. It would also help researchers to understand whether affective responses influence the general attitude towards change as assumed by affective event theory, or that "variations in evaluation along the particular dimensions of an attitudinal response will cause variations in global attitude" (Piderit, 2000, p. 787), as the present study assumes.

To conclude, the results of this study have implications for practitioners active in change management and human resources disciplines. Although the importance of proper information and communication within the regular working context, especially in times of organizational change, is broadly recognized, professionals are still struggling to devise an effective communication approach. Cascading high-level communication principles down to practical activities that contribute to these principles remains problematic, or at least a major challenge. This is further compounded by the fact that any attempt to flesh out such a change management approach and detailed activity calendar is often overtaken by actual developments, making reactive and ad hoc communication inevitable. The conceptualization presented in this research can help replace the commonly used and sometimes rather abstract, vague and ineffective communication principles. By continuously considering whether information about the change (1) is received in good time, (2) is useful, (3) is adequate and (4) satisfies employees' questions about the change, the effectiveness and quality of that information is likely to increase. A direct consequence of adopting these four communication principles is that the communication approach acquires a bi-directional and individually oriented character. Too often communication practices fail because change information is too general, is not segmented to the relevant stakeholder groups, or fails to consider unique individual situations.

Further, when seeking to achieve organizational change it is increasingly important to consider both pre-change and change determinants of attitude towards change. As this research demonstrates, proper change information remains crucial, but if the organization suffers from a history of unfulfilled promises and has a workforce that is not sufficiently engaged, organizational change is doomed to fail. The increasing frequency of organizational change puts pressure on the fulfillment of the psychological contract and the levels of engagement. Organizations that manage to fulfill the psychological contract and to cultivate engagement among their employees in relatively stable times are more likely to experience constructive responses by change recipients in times of organizational change, at least if this change goes hand in hand with proper change information.

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7 How change climate influences the attitude towards change: the role of type of change

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Abstract

This study examined the moderating role of the type of organizational change on the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change. The study assessed change climate by measuring psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history. In a sample of 396 mainly German, Dutch and English employees, data were gathered using questionnaires. Results confirmed that the relationship between change climate and the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to organizational change differs for various types of organizational change. Particularly the degree to which the change was perceived to be planned by management was found to moderate the influence of psychological contract fulfillment and trust on the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees towards a change. Limitations of the study as well as recommendations for the future and implications for practitioners are discussed.

7.1 Introduction

Due to population growth, political shifts and technological developments, the world of work is accelerating at a dizzying pace (Piderit, 2000; Guest, 2004). Since an organization's ability to adapt to such a rapidly changing environment is an important determinant of its competitive advantage (Guest, 2004), "the question is not whether organizations will change but rather how fast and who will thrive" (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007). In organizational contexts that are characterized by a high frequency of change, employees can feel fatigued by change or more anxious as a consequence of the unpredictability of change (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). This underlines the increasing need for a constructive change climate as a basis for generating positive attitudes towards change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). Bouckennooghe, Devos and Van den Broeck (2009) describe change climate as the "general context characteristics conducive to change. It refers to employees' perceptions of the internal circumstances under which change occurs" (p. 562). Given the recent emergence of the term change climate, empirical examinations of its relationship with employee attitude towards change are scarce. Moreover, little has been written about which variables should be assessed to quantitatively examine the concept of change climate, which in essence is a content-free concept (Rousseau, 1988). As Blau's (1964) social exchange theory provides a "theoretical platform from which to understand the development of employee attitudes toward organizational change" (Albrecht, 2010, p. 195), the present study adopts this theoretical perspective to empirically explore the influence of change climate on employees' attitudes towards organizational change.

In accordance with Blau's (1964) early work, social exchange refers to the "reciprocal acts of benefit, in which individuals offer help, advice, approval, and so forth to one another without negotiation of terms and without knowledge of whether or when the other will reciprocate" (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000, p. 1396). From this perspective, the attitude of an employee towards organizational change depends on whether the employee perceives that the organization cares about the employee's well-being and values the employee's contribution, which makes the

employee feel obliged to reciprocate by responding positively to the organizational change (Albrecht, 2010). When considering his or her own contribution to the exchange relationship, the employee expects that this contribution (i.e. the employee's positive attitude towards organizational change) will be reciprocated by the organization. Reciprocation in times of change can for example mean the offering of a new challenging position, an increase in autonomy or a reduction of time-consuming administrative tasks. From a more conservative perspective, it could also refer to safeguarding an employee's position, which in times of economic crises or layoffs can be perceived as a considerable contribution to the exchange relationship.

Since uncertainty and risk are inherent to social exchanges (Molm et al., 2000), a sufficient amount of trust in the other party (i.e., that this party will reciprocate) is required. However, in turbulent times of organizational change, factors like inadequate communication about the vision behind the change (Kotter, 1995) or the spreading of negative rumors can foster anxiety and uncertainty among employees about the organization's intentions or actions (Bordia, Jones, Gallois, Callan, & DiFonzo, 2006). Consequently, this anxiety and uncertainty puts employees' trust in the organization to the test. Given the important role that trust plays in the social exchange relationship in times of organizational change, this study explores the influence of three trust-related change climate variables on an employee's attitude towards change. The first variable is the employee's general *trust* in management and the organization which can be defined as an employee's "expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 238). The second variable is *psychological contract fulfillment*, which refers to the "discrepancy between an employee's understanding of what was promised and the employee's perception of what he or she has actually received" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 231). The third change climate variable is *change history*, which concerns the extent to which an individual employee perceives that past organizational changes were successfully implemented by the organization and its management (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997; Metselaar, 1997; Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007).

This study furthermore explores the moderating role that *type of change* plays in the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change. In his review study on the positioning of change recipients' attitudes towards change in organizational change literature, Bouckennooghe (2010) found that to date, attitude towards change has mainly been explored in a planned change context. However, as Weick and Quinn (1999) emphasized in their seminal conceptual work on episodic and continuous change, the responses of employees to organizational change differ per type of organizational change. The application of findings from research conducted during planned changes to a continuous change context is therefore not necessarily justifiable (Bouckennooghe, 2010). Yet from present empirical research we know very little about the role that type of change plays in the relationship between antecedents and attitude towards change (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). This study therefore explores how the perceived type of change moderates the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change. More specifically, based on McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional type of change

construct, it is assessed whether the influence of trust, psychological contract fulfillment and change history on attitude towards change differs for perceived (1) unplanned versus planned changes, (2) organization-wide versus subsystem changes, (3) transformational versus incremental changes and (4) remedial versus developmental changes. The next section further introduces the central concepts of this study, viz. attitude towards change and change climate, followed by a closer introduction of the change climate variables explored in this study and the moderating variable type of change.

7.2 Attitude towards change

Numerous studies have been conducted to assess employees' responses to organizational changes. Early research primarily focused on employees' behavioral responses to change, such as resistance (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Later, also affective responses such as stress (e.g. Bordia et al., 2006) and cognitive reactions such as sensemaking (e.g. Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006) were examined. Only recently have researchers begun to consider the change recipient's responses to organizational change as a multidimensional attitude comprising an affective, behavioral and cognitive component (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006; Bouckennooghe et al., 2009; Oreg et al., 2011). Such a multidimensional conceptualization serves as a more complete typology of employee responses to organizational change (Bouckennooghe, 2010). In line with the definition provided by Bouckennooghe (2010), the present study defines attitude towards change as a tridimensional state composed of affective, behavioral and cognitive reactions towards organizational change. Here, the affective dimension represents a change recipient's feelings, moods and emotions concerning the change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006); the behavioral dimension refers to the change recipient's actions or intentions to act in response to the organizational change (Oreg, 2006); and the cognitive dimension comprises an employee's evaluative thoughts and beliefs about the change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006).

7.3 Change climate

Organizational change research has exposed numerous antecedents of employee responses to organizational change (see, e.g. Oreg et al., 2011). Most change managers are well acquainted with these determinants and carefully consider them when designing their change management and communication approaches. However, as strikingly illustrated by Schneider, Brief and Guzzo (1996), it still happens too often that organizational changes fail to take root and hence fail to produce the desired and intended results. According to Schneider et al. (1996), this results in the introduction of other changes that subsequently fail as well, which sets in motion a dysfunctional spiral causing frustration among management and cynicism among employees. Such a development is problematic since "successful

organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes” (Piderit, 2000, p. 783). Whether or not sustained change is accomplished therefore depends, according to Schneider et al. (1996), on how employees perceive the organizational climate.

In her work on the construction of the concept of climate, Rousseau (1988) explains that “essentially, climate is individual descriptions of the social setting or context of which the person is a part” (p. 140). More specifically she distinguishes four types of climate, namely (1) *psychological climate*, referring to the unaggregated individual perceptions of their environment, (2) *aggregated climate*, referring to individual perceptions which are averaged to a formal hierarchical level, (3) *collective climate*, which emerges from agreement between individuals about their perceptions of the context, and (4) *organizational climate*, referring to either a real organizational attribute or to individual perceptions that are aggregated to this organizational level. Empirical climate research to date has adopted both unaggregated and aggregated operationalizations of climate (Patterson et al., 2005). However, given the adoption of the social exchange perspective in this study, assuming that the evaluation of the balance in the social exchange between the particular employee and the organization is an individual’s unaggregated perception, the present study considers climate as psychological climate.

Recently, scholars have begun to apply the concept of climate in an organizational change setting, resulting in the emergence of the concept of change climate (also referred to as climate of change). To our knowledge, Tierney (1999) was the first to apply and empirically examine the concept of change climate. Although she did not provide an explicit conceptualization of the concept, she distinguished five dimensions contributing to a change-conducive climate, namely (1) risk-taking and deviation from the status quo, (2) open communication and information sharing, (3) operational freedom, (4) employee development and (5) trust. Later, Bouckennooghe and Devos (2007) examined the influence of psychological change climate on readiness to change by distinguishing the following psychological change climate variables: (1) participation in decision making, (2) quality of shared change information, (3) trust in top management and (4) history of change. While Tierney (1999) as well as Bouckennooghe and Devos (2007) applied an unaggregated climate perspective, Rafferty and Jimmieson (2009) adopted an aggregated climate perspective. They described change climate in terms of a teams’ shared perceptions regarding change processes comprising two dimensions: (1) change information and (2) change participation. This brief overview of change climate studies demonstrates that besides concepts related to the internal context (e.g. trust in top management), concepts describing an individual’s disposition (e.g. risk-taking and deviation from the status quo) and concepts assessing the change process (e.g. change information) are used to represent change climate as well. Considering Rousseau’s (1988) explanation that change climate in essence refers to “individual descriptions of the social setting or context of which the person is a part” (p. 140), it seems inaccurate and inappropriate to include concepts not related to the internal context. A more accurate and refined conceptualization is therefore needed.

Oreg et al.’s (2011) recently developed classification of attitude towards change antecedents serves as a comprehensive framework to discern concepts that do and do not represent change climate. First of all, Oreg et al. (2011) differentiate between

pre-change antecedents that “constitute conditions that are independent of the organizational change and which existed prior to the introduction of the change” and change antecedents that “involve aspects of the change itself” (p. 26). More specifically, pre-change antecedents refer to (1) change recipient characteristics or (2) the internal context, while change antecedents refer to either (3) the change process, (4) the perceived benefit or harm caused by the change, or (5) the change content. When considering Oreg et al.’s (2011) classification while elaborating on Bouckennooghe et al.’s (2009) description of change climate as the general internal context characteristics conducive to change, the present study adopts the view that change climate should be operationalized with pre-change internal context variables. The next part of this paper discusses the influence of three of such pre-change internal context antecedents (i.e. psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history) on attitude towards change.

7.4 Psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history

Psychological contract fulfillment. The psychological contract can be defined as the individual’s beliefs about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, 1990). These obligations stem from perceived promises, so that psychological contract fulfillment refers to the perceived discrepancy between what was promised and what was actually delivered (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Numerous studies have demonstrated that a greater fulfillment of the perceived organizational promises within the psychological contract is related to more extra-role behavior (Turnley & Feldman, 2000), job satisfaction (Sutton & Griffin, 2004) and organizational commitment (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002), and to less emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003), intention to quit (Kickul, Lester, & Finkl, 2002) and actual turnover (Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). As demonstrated by Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski and Bravo (2007) in their meta-analysis on work-related outcomes of psychological contract breach, a broad range of affective, behavioral and cognitive outcomes has been examined. However, empirical research on the influence of psychological contract fulfillment on the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change is scarce (see, for an exception, Van den Heuvel and Schalk, 2009). As research has been shown that a more positive evaluation of the psychological contract results in more positive work-related responses, it is predicted here that psychological contract fulfillment is positively related to the three attitude towards change dimensions.

Trust. In line with the definition provided by Morrison and Robinson (1997), this study assumes that when an employee trusts the organization and its representatives, the employee expects and beliefs that the organization’s future actions will be favorable or at least not detrimental to the employee’s interests. Trust in one’s organization and its representatives has been found to be positively related to an employee’s constructive responses to organizational change (Mishra & Spreitzer,

1998), openness to change (Ertürk, 2008), and perceived legitimacy of the change (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). However, change breeds uncertainty (Rousseau, 1996) and trust might therefore reduce the extent to which the change is evaluated as a threat (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). Oreg (2006), who assessed antecedents and consequences of resistance to change, found that trust in management was negatively related to affective, behavioral and cognitive resistance to change. In line with the work by Oreg (2006), this study therefore expects trust to be positively related to employee's affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change.

Change history. Change history refers to the extent to which an individual employee perceives that past organizational changes were successfully implemented by the organization and its management (Reichers et al., 1997; Metselaar, 1997; Devos et al., 2007). Schneider et al. (1996) emphasized that organizations that are about to implement major organizational changes should carefully consider whether management has “a track record of successfully implementing major changes” (p. 17). They noted that if the answer to this question is negative, management should consider putting the change on hold and getting the ‘organizational house’ in order first. After all, individual employees perceive managers who are responsible for the failure of past organizational changes as less credible (Reichers et al., 1997). Moreover, as Bandura's (1982) social learning theory proposes, individual employees are less fearful of events in which their role models, i.e. managers and supervisors, have been successful in the past (Devos et al., 2007). The present research therefore answers Bouckennooghe and Devos' (2007) call to incorporate the history of change when observing an organization's change climate. This study expects that the more an employee perceives that past organizational changes were successfully implemented by the organization and its management, the more positive the employee's attitude towards organizational change will be.

All change climate variables are thus expected to be positively related to attitude towards change. However, as argued before, the present study expects that the perceived type of organizational change moderates these positive relationships.

7.5 Type of change

Various attempts have been made to categorize organizational changes. Most commonly, change is categorized into planned and emergent change. *Planned* change is regarded as “a process that moves from one ‘fixed state’ to another through a series of pre-planned steps” (Bamford & Forrester, 2003, p. 547), and typically follows Lewin's (1951) process of freezing, unfreezing and refreezing. An *emergent* change can be conceived as the process of moving from one relatively stable state to another. This process occurs in a more spontaneous and unplanned manner, either because managers take decisions based on implicit assumptions or because internal or external factors beyond the control of managers influence the change (Iles & Sutherland, 2001). Somewhat related is the influential perspective of Weick and Quinn (1999), who distinguish *episodic* change which is infrequent,

discontinuous and intentional from *continuous* change which is constant, evolving and cumulative.

Another classification was provided by Ackerman (1997), who distinguishes developmental, transitional and transformational changes. While *developmental* changes intend to enhance or correct certain organizational aspects and often aim to improve skills or processes, *transitional* changes aim to achieve a known desired end-state that differs from the current situation, and *transformational* changes intend to radically shift the assumptions made by and the mindsets of the organizational members (Iles & Sutherland, 2001).

Finally, McNamara (2006) suggests a more refined subdivision into four dimensions, namely (1) *unplanned versus planned* change, (2) *organization-wide versus subsystem* change, (3) *transformational versus incremental* change, and (4) *remedial versus developmental* change. By incorporating the previous classifications in his four-dimensional construct, McNamara's (2006) type of change classification provides a more all-embracing framework that does more justice to the variety of organizational changes that occur. The bipolarity of McNamara's (2006) type of change dimensions furthermore facilitates the operationalization of each dimension along a continuum. For these reasons, the present study applies McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional type of change construct to assess the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change. Based on McNamara's work (2006), the four type of change dimensions are presented in greater detail in the next part, and hypotheses are formulated.

7.5.1 *Unplanned versus planned change*

The first type of change dimension refers to the extent to which the change is perceived to be planned by management (McNamara, 2006). Planned changes have a proactive character and are often illustrative for large-scale restructurings, system implementations or strategic change programs. Unplanned changes, on the other hand, tend to be responses to major unanticipated events such as a sudden drop in sales or a scandal, with a substantial element of surprise. The origin of these surprising events can be within the organization as well as in the organization's external environment (Knowles & Saxberg, 1988). By definition, unplanned changes contain the element of surprise for the ones in charge of the organization or of the change itself. As a consequence, unplanned changes are often characterized by a lack of time to carefully plan announcements, to gradually create awareness or to staff the change project team with sufficient and skilled resources. Instead of being ahead of developments, change management during unplanned changes is likely to have a reactive character, creating scope for rumors and causing greater uncertainty among change recipients. Compared to planned changes, the course of unplanned changes is typically less predictable, which generates uncertainty among employees about whether the organization will reciprocate constructive responses to the change. Consequently, during unplanned changes a greater appeal is made to an employee's trust that the organization will reciprocate. Therefore, the extent to which the internal organizational context is characterized by trust, psychological contract

fulfillment and a successful history of organization change, is predicted to play a stronger role during unplanned changes.

Hypothesis 1: Unplanned versus planned change moderates the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change in such a way that the relationship is stronger for unplanned changes than for planned changes.

7.5.2 *Organization-wide versus subsystem change*

The second type of change dimension concerns whether the organizational change impacts the entire organization or only a smaller part (McNamara, 2006). Examples of organization-wide changes are mergers, complete restructurings or culture changes, which impact the entire internal organizational system. Subsystem changes, on the other hand, only impact a smaller part of the organization, for example a department, a process or a product. Although organization-wide changes typically have more impact on the organization as a whole than subsystem changes, the impact can differ substantially per division, department or team. Moreover, an organization-wide change might not be perceived as such when an individual's direct environment is not impacted much.

Leadership within the employee's direct environment plays a central role in the creation and preservation of a climate conducive to change. During subsystem changes these subsystem managers are likely to have a greater stake in the decision making and implementation process than during organization-wide changes. During subsystem changes the responsibility for the individual consequences caused by the change is more likely to be attributed to subsystem managers than to top management. Therefore, it is predicted that the effect of change climate is stronger during subsystem changes than during organization-wide changes.

Hypothesis 2: Organization-wide versus subsystem change moderates the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change in such a way that the relationship is stronger for subsystem changes than for organization-wide changes.

7.5.3 *Transformational versus incremental change*

McNamara's third type of change dimension distinguishes transformational from incremental changes. Transformational changes are radical and fundamental changes, that for example alter "an organization's structure and culture from the traditional top-down, hierarchical structure to a large amount of self-directing teams" (McNamara, 2006, p. 174). Incremental changes, on the other hand, are often not experienced as changes by organizational members because such changes can constitute a gradual and often continuous process of improvement. Quality management, for example, can be characterized as an incremental change process (McNamara, 2006). Since transformational changes are more disruptive to the status quo in the employment relationship, the positive influence of a change-conducive

climate on attitude towards change is expected to be stronger during transformational changes than during incremental changes.

Hypothesis 3: Transformational versus incremental change moderates the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change in such a way that the relationship is stronger for transformational changes than for incremental changes.

7.5.4 Remedial versus developmental change

In the fourth type of change dimension, remedial changes are distinguished from developmental changes. While remedial changes serve to cure a particular problem that is often perceived as urgent, developmental changes aim to further develop or improve an already healthy situation (McNamara, 2006). Developmental changes therefore often lack a sense of urgency among managers as well as employees. The understanding of and the commitment to an organizational change then depends on “how specific goals are and how important it is for members of the organization to achieve those goals” (McNamara, 2006, p. 174). Typically, well-functioning organizations are characterized by lower levels of perceived need for change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). In such a situation, a change climate characterized by high levels of trust in management seems to be a prerequisite for constructive responses to a change initiative. Moreover, remedial changes can be interpreted as failure on the part of management, since management has not been able to prevent the problem from occurring. It is therefore expected that the influence of change climate on attitude towards change is stronger during developmental changes than during remedial changes.

Hypothesis 4: Remedial versus developmental change moderates the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change in such a way that the relationship is stronger for developmental changes than for remedial changes.

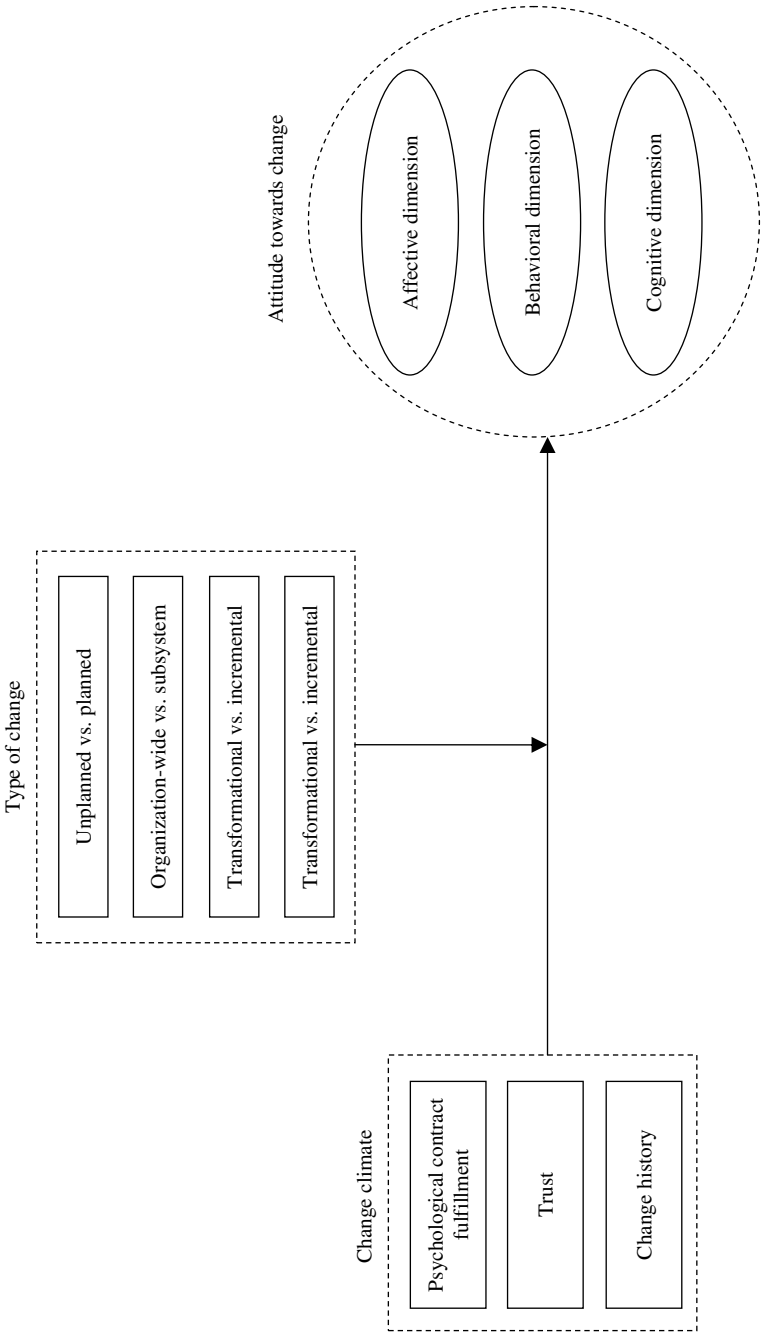
The theoretical model of this study is presented in Figure 1.

7.6 Method

7.6.1 Procedure and participants

The study’s purpose was to include a wide variety of organizations and types of organizational change that varied along McNamara’s (2006) type of change dimensions. This study therefore adopted an exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling approach to obtain a random sample of respondents. Initially 150 persons in the network of the researchers, who were employed in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, were invited to fill out the anonymous survey. They were also requested to forward the survey-link to people in their networks. All respondents were asked to participate under the condition that they had a paid job

FIGURE 1
Theoretical model of the study



and were not self-employed. After four weeks, the survey had been completed by 399 respondents. Three outliers were identified, so that further analyses were based on 396 respondents, of which 44% was male. The average age was 36.5 (s.d. = 11.5) and 33% was single or lived as a single, 57% was married or cohabiting and 10% was living with family, parents or friends. For the majority of the respondents the highest degree of education attained was high secondary education (37%) or tertiary education (57%). As for the job-levels, most respondents were lower level white collar workers (15%), intermediate white collar workers or white collar supervisors (35%) or upper white collar worker, middle management or executive staff (30%). Most respondents were employed in Germany (70%), the Netherlands (20%) or the United Kingdom (4%), and had a corresponding nationality.

7.6.2 Translations

The survey was made available in German, Dutch and English. These versions were filled out by 73%, 18% and 9% of the 396 respondents, respectively. Although the 'trust' scale (Psycones, 2006) was already available in all three languages, the 'psychological contract fulfillment' scale (Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2008; Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2011) was only available in Dutch and English, and the 'attitude towards change' (Oreg, 2006) and 'change history' scale (Bouckennooghe & Devos, 2007) were only available in English. The 'type of change' scale was self-developed, based on the original English classification. A group of native Dutch speaking and native German speaking researchers in the field of HR studies made the required translations of the scales.

7.6.3 Measurements

Attitude towards change. The dependent variable of the research, attitude towards change, was measured using Oreg's (2006) change attitude scale. The scale consist of five items for each of the three dimensions. For all change-related questions in the survey (i.e., the attitude towards change and type of change questions), the respondents were requested to keep in mind one change that was taking place at the time of the survey or that would take place in the near future. For that reason, original items phrased in the past tense were rephrased in the present tense.

Examples of items that measured the affective dimension are 'I am afraid of the change' and 'I have a bad feeling about the change'. Two items included in the behavioral subscale are 'I look for ways to prevent the change from taking place' and 'I complain about the change to my colleagues'. And the items 'I think that it's a negative thing that we are going through this change' and 'I believe that the change will make my job harder' are examples of items included in the cognitive subscale. A five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used, and the negatively phrased items were reverse coded before further analyses so that higher scores indicate a more positive attitude towards change.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the three-dimensional composition of the attitude towards change construct. The proposed 3-

factor model, which follows the original ABC-formalization (i.e. affect, behavior, cognition), was compared to a rival 1-factor model, which follows a unitary perspective on attitudes towards change. When setting up the rival measurement models for the attitudes towards change measurement, one obviously poorly fitting item needed to be deleted for each of the three subscales (i.e. the third, fifth, and fifth item, respectively). This reduced the total number of indicators from 15 to 12 (i.e., 3 x 4 items). The average correlation between items of the same subscale was .56 and the average correlation between items of different subscales was .42. Hence, the item pool was fairly homogeneous. The reliability coefficients of the affective, behavioral and cognitive subscale were .87, .81 and .81, respectively.

Model-fit statistics for the two rivaling measurement models, a 3-factor model corresponding to the original ABC formalization versus a 1-factor model corresponding to a uni-dimensional perspective, are presented in Table 1. Note that in both models, the measurement errors of the first two indicators of the two first subscales were allowed to correlate to account for a method effect due to wording content similarity. The χ^2 likelihood ratio test for model comparison indicated that the uni-dimensional 1-factor model does not fit the data as well as the ABC 3-factor alternative ($\Delta\chi^2 (3/2) = 286$, $p < .0001$), and also the BIC clearly favors the latter model above the uni-dimensional model. Furthermore, the 3-factor model shows an acceptable absolute goodness-of-fit according to established criteria, with a good TLI, and an RMSEA and SRMR which are below or equal to the common rules of thumb. The parameters of the preferred 3-factor model for the attitude towards change survey are given in Table 2. All items have a high loading on their respective target factor, providing additional support for the chosen model. Notice that the homogeneity of the item pool also shines through in the relatively large positive factor inter-correlations.

TABLE 1
Comparison of measurement models for the attitudes towards change scale

Model	χ^2	df	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	BIC	$\Delta\chi^2_{df=3/2}$
ABC 3-factor	165	49	.94	.08	.05	10795	290*
Uni-dimensional 1-factor	455	52	.81	.14	.07	11148	

Note. * $p < .0125$.

Type of change. To measure the four type of change dimensions defined by McNamara (2006), the respondents were asked to characterize the organizational change they had selected. For each dimension a five-point scale was used. To assess the first type of change dimension, the respondents were asked whether they characterized the change as ‘unplanned’ (1) or ‘planned’ (5). To measure the second dimension, they were asked whether the change impacted ‘the entire organization’ (1) or only ‘a part of the organization’ (5). The third dimension was measured by asking the respondents if the change took place ‘radically’ (1) or ‘incrementally’ (5). And for the fourth dimension the respondents needed to indicate if the change was meant to ‘solve a problem’ (1) or ‘further develop a situation’ (5).

TABLE 2
Measurement part of the MIMIC model of the impact of change climate on attitude towards change (ATC), moderated by type of change

Indicator	ATC factor loadings β			Correlated Error
	Affective	Behavioral	Cognitive	
Y1	.71			.49
Y2	.72			
Y3	.86			
Y4	.78			
Y5		.67		.42
Y6		.79		
Y7		.84		
Y8		.54		
Y9			.82	
Y10			.93	
Y11			.57	
Y12			.60	
Factor inter-correlations ρ				
Affective	1	.84*	.64*	
Behavioral		1	.77*	
Cognitive			1	

Note. * $p < .0125$; Average correlation among indicators of different factors: .42; Average correlation among indicators of the same factor: .63, .54, and .52, for the three dimensions respectively.

Psychological contract fulfillment. The fulfillment of the psychological contract was assessed with the scale developed by Freese, Schalk and Croon (2008). The scale consists of six dimensions, namely job content, career development, social atmosphere, organization policies, work-life balance and rewards. For each dimension, the respondents were presented with four items that primarily served to frame the dimension. For each item, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they considered their employer was obliged to offer these aspects (e.g. 'Variation in work' for the dimension job content and 'adjustment of working hours to fit personal life' for work-life balance). After each set of 4 items, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their organization had fulfilled its obligations regarding that particular dimension. A five-point scale, ranging from 'much less than expected' (1) to 'much more than expected' (5) was used. The average of the six fulfillment scores was included in the final analyses and the reliability coefficient of the scale was .80.

Trust. The change climate variable 'trust' was measured by means of three items derived from Psycones (2006), namely 'to what extent do you trust senior management to look after your best interests?', 'in general, how much do you trust your organization to keep its promises or commitments to you and other

employees?', and 'to what extent do you trust your immediate line manager to look after your best interests?'. A five-point scale ranging from 'not at all' (1) to 'to a great extent' (5) was used. The reliability of the scale was .84.

Change history. The variable 'change history' was measured with Bouckennooghe and Devos' (2007) scale which is based on the work of Metselaar (1997). The scale comprises four items, namely 'my organization has always been able to cope with new situations', 'past changes generally were successful', 'announced changes usually came to nothing in the past' and 'my organization has proven to be capable of major changes'. Because the third item was phrased negatively, it was reverse coded. A five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) was used to measure the four items. The total scale had a reliability score of .80.

7.6.4 Analyses

To explore whether the type of change moderated the effect of change climate on attitudes towards change, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. A Multiple Indicator Multiple Causes (MIMIC) model was set up to connect a structural regression part to the measurement model (see, e.g. Jöreskog & Goldberger, 1975; Muthén, 1989). Thus, in the model, the interacting sets of independent and moderator variables function as predictors (i.e., multiple causes) of the latent factors that are defined by the attitudes towards change survey items (i.e., multiple indicators).

The model was specified starting from the covariance matrix and fitted using maximum likelihood through the Lavaan library in the statistical software package R (<http://www.r-project.org/>). Model fit was evaluated based on commonly recommended goodness-of-fit indices (see, e.g., Hu & Bentler, 1999), including the χ^2 of the model fit, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). Given the large number of predictors and the inclusion of interactions (i.e., 19 predictors = 3 independent variables + 4 moderators + 3 x 4 mutual interactions), a conservative approach was followed to account for the multiple testing problem and to safeguard against over-interpretation of the results. The significance level alpha was set to .0125, lowering the default .05 by a factor 4 (i.e., the number of moderators) and raising the threshold for significant results.

7.7 Results

The descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables included in this study are presented in Table 3. The results of the latent regression of the three factors underlying the attitude towards change construct on the interacting sets of change climate and type of change predictors are reported in Table 4. The reported regression coefficients are y-standardized and the predictors are centered on their

TABLE 3
Descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables in the study (N = 396)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Psychological contract fulfillment	2.95	.58	1									
2. Trust	3.29	.85	.65*	1								
3. Change history	3.44	.69	.48*	.54*	1							
4. Unplanned vs. planned change	3.65	1.13	.24*	.23*	.26*	1						
5. Organization-wide vs. subsystem change	2.50	1.41	.06*	-.04*	-.06*	.00*	1					
6. Transformational vs. incremental change	3.16	1.24	.16*	.13*	.15*	.24*	.14*	1				
7. Remedial vs. developmental change	3.46	1.26	.22*	.20*	.28*	.38*	.00*	.21*	1			
8. Attitude towards change (affective dimension)	0	1	.25*	.23*	.30*	.21*	.05*	.26*	.38*	1		
9. Attitude towards change (behavioral dimension)	0	1	.26*	.23*	.33*	.30*	-.05*	.23*	.30*	.84*	1	
10. Attitude towards change (cognitive dimension)	0	1	.32*	.38*	.43*	.34*	.01*	.26*	.33*	.64*	.77*	1

Note. * $p < .0125$; The three attitude towards change variables in the table represent the three latent factors.

TABLE 4
Structural part of the MIMIC model of the impact of change climate on attitudes towards change (ATC), moderated by type of change

	Affective factor ATC			Behavioral factor ATC			Cognitive factor ATC		
	β	Z	p	β	Z	p	β	Z	p
Psychological contract fulfillment	.18	1.57		.21	1.71		.04	.42	
Trust	.01	.12		-.04	-.45		.19	2.50	*
Change history	.24	2.69	*	.27	2.94	*	.36	4.48	*
Unplanned vs. planned change (M1)	.01	.18		.15	2.98	*	.14	3.21	*
Psychological contract fulfillment x M1	-.32	-2.50	*	-.34	-2.52	*	-.35	-3.02	*
Trust x M1	.27	3.16	*	.30	3.40	*	.35	4.54	*
Change history x M1	-.07	-.76		.04	.42		-.03	-.40	
Organization-wide vs. subsystem change (M2)	.18	1.57		.21	1.71		.04	.42	
Psychological contract fulfillment x M2	.01	.12		-.04	-.45		.19	2.50	*
Trust x M2	.24	2.69	*	.27	2.94	*	.36	4.48	*
Change history x M2	-.11	-1.80		-.07	-1.10		.05	.86	

(Continued)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

	Affective factor ATC			Behavioral factor ATC			Cognitive factor ATC		
	β	Z	p	β	Z	p	β	Z	p
Transformational vs. incremental change (M3)	.13	3.06	*	.11	2.53	*	.12	3.22	*
Psychological contract fulfillment x M3	-.01	-.09		.10	1.04		.10	1.24	
Trust x M3	-.05	-.76		-.09	-1.46		-.05	-.94	
Change history x M3	.05	.70		.04	.56		.01	.23	
Remedial vs. developmental change (M4)	.21	4.74	*	.09	1.94		.11	2.73	*
Psychological contract fulfillment x M4	.20	2.16		.02	.18		.01	.15	
Trust x M4	-.04	-.63		-.09	-1.15		-.13	-2.01	
Change history x M4	.06	.79		.09	1.08		.23	3.23	*
R ²	.28			.25			.37		

Note. * $p \leq .0125$; $\chi^2_{(df=220)} = 431$, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .03.

respective sample mean. The latter implies that the linear effect parameters of the predictors can be interpreted as their average effect on the dependent variable, controlling for all other predictors.

When considering the direct relationship between the change climate variables and attitude towards change, the inter-correlations (see Table 3) demonstrate that psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history are positively and significantly related to all three latent attitude towards change factors ($p < .0125$). When controlling for all other predictors, as done in the SEM analyses (see Table 4), psychological contract fulfillment was not found to be directly related to the three attitude towards change dimensions, trust was found to be directly and positively related to the cognitive attitude towards change dimension, and change history was directly and positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions ($p < .0125$). The interpretation of these direct effects, however, depends on whether relations were moderated by type of change. In the next part of this article, the interactions demonstrated by the SEM analyses are presented per type of change dimension.

7.7.1 *Unplanned versus planned change*

For the first type of change dimension, unplanned versus planned change, the analyses highlighted six significant interaction effects. First of all, the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change was stronger during unplanned changes than during planned changes ($\beta = -.32$, $\beta = -.34$ and $\beta = -.35$ for the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension, respectively; $p < .0125$). Figure 2 depicts the interaction effect for the affective attitude towards change dimension, which is comparable to the behavioral and cognitive dimension.

Second, the type of change dimension, unplanned versus planned change, moderated the positive relationship between trust and all three attitude towards change dimensions. However, contrary to what was expected, the relationship was stronger during planned changes than during unplanned changes ($\beta = .27$, $\beta = .30$ and $\beta = .35$ for the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension, respectively; $p < .0125$). The interaction effect for the affective attitude towards change dimension is presented in Figure 3.

Furthermore, the results show that unplanned versus planned change did not moderate the relationship between change history and attitude towards change. Concerning the direct influence of unplanned versus planned change on attitude towards change, significant direct effects were found for the behavioral ($\beta = .15$; $p < .0125$) and the cognitive ($\beta = .14$; $p < .0125$) attitude towards change dimension. However, these direct effects are distorted by the interactions with psychological contract fulfillment and trust.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that unplanned versus planned change would moderate the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change, such that the relationship would be stronger for unplanned changes than for planned changes. This hypothesis could only be confirmed for the relationship between the change

climate variable of psychological contract fulfillment and the three attitude towards change dimensions.

7.7.2 Organization-wide versus subsystem change

With regard to the second type of change dimension, organization-wide versus subsystem change, the analyses revealed one significant interaction effect (see Figure 4). The positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective attitude towards change dimension was stronger for subsystem changes than for organization-wide changes ($\beta = .22$; $p < .0125$). No such interaction effect was found for the behavioral and cognitive attitude towards change dimension, or for the relationship between the other two change climate variables and attitude towards change. The analyses also failed to expose significant direct effects of organization-wide versus subsystem change on attitude towards change.

In Hypothesis 2 it was postulated that organization-wide versus subsystem change would moderate the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change, such that the relationship would be stronger for subsystem changes than for organization-wide changes. This hypothesis could only be confirmed for the relationship between the change climate variable of psychological contract fulfillment and the affective attitude towards change dimension.

7.7.3 Transformational versus incremental change

The third type of change dimension distinguished transformational from incremental change. The analyses showed no significant interaction effects in the relationship between the change climate variables and attitude towards change. Hypothesis 3, which expected that transformational versus incremental change would moderate the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change, such that the relationship would be stronger for transformational changes than for incremental changes, was therefore fully rejected.

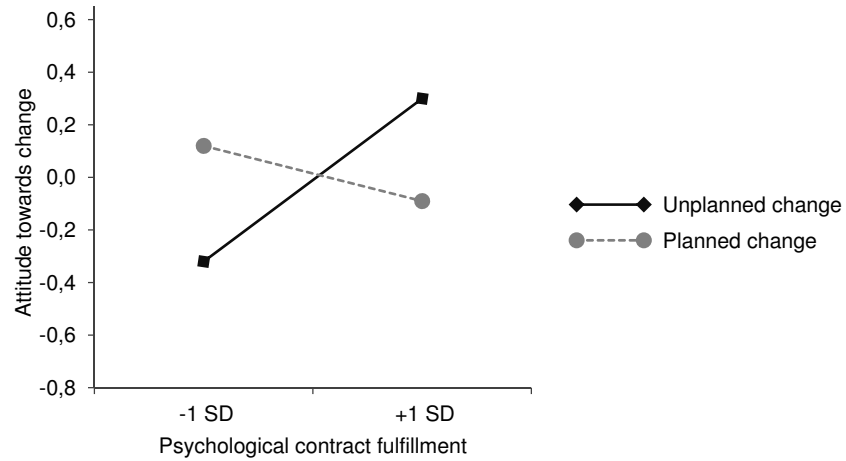
However, the analyses showed that transformational versus incremental change was directly and positively related to the affective ($\beta = .13$; $p < .0125$), the behavioral ($\beta = .11$; $p < .0125$) as well as the cognitive dimension ($\beta = .12$; $p < .0125$) of attitude towards change. This implies that when employees perceive an organizational change as transformational, rather than incremental, their affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change are significantly more negative.

7.7.4 Remedial versus developmental change

The fourth type of change dimension that was expected to moderate the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change was remedial versus developmental change. For this dimension, one significant interaction effect was found (see Figure 5). The analyses showed that the positive relationship between change history and the cognitive attitude towards change dimension was stronger for developmental changes than for remedial changes ($\beta = .23$; $p < .0125$).

FIGURE 2

Unplanned versus planned change as a moderating variable on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change (for a person scoring average on all other predictors)

**FIGURE 3**

Unplanned versus planned change as a moderating variable on the relationship between trust and attitude towards change (for a person scoring average on all other predictors)

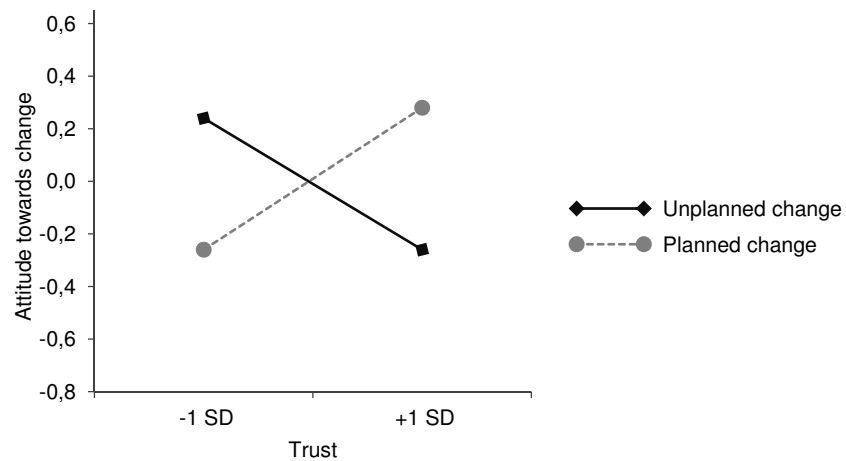


FIGURE 4

Organization-wide versus subsystem change as a moderating variable on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change (for a person scoring average on all other predictors)

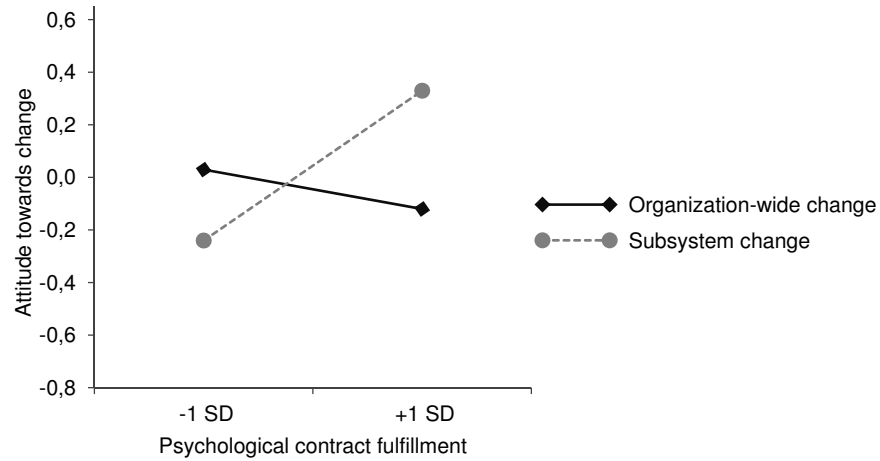
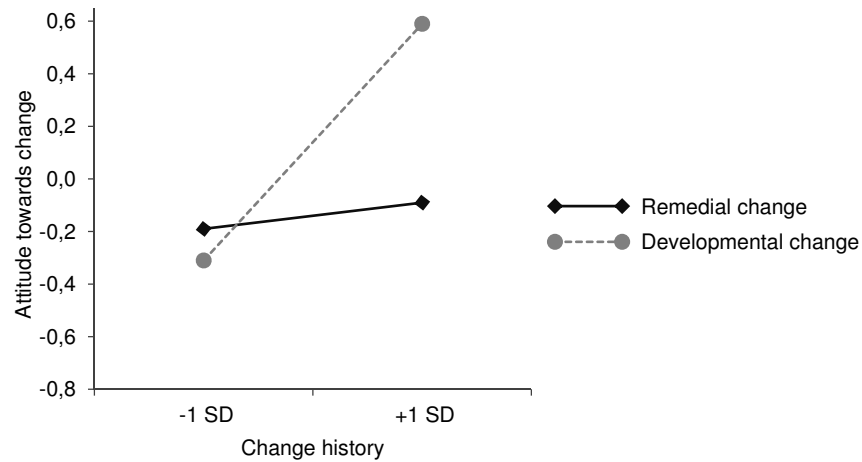


FIGURE 5

Remedial versus developmental change as a moderating variable on the relationship between change history and attitude towards change (for a person scoring average on all other predictors)



No significant interaction effects were found for the affective and behavioral attitude towards change dimension, or for the relationship between the change climate variables of psychological contract fulfillment and trust and the dependent variable of attitude towards change.

Furthermore, remedial versus developmental change was found to be directly and positively related to the affective ($\beta = .21$; $p < .0125$) and the cognitive attitude towards change dimension ($\beta = .11$; $p < .0125$). Although the relationship with the cognitive dimension is influenced by the interaction effect with change history, the relationship with the affective attitude towards change dimension is not distorted by any interaction effects. This implies that the more an employee perceives that the organizational change intends to further improve an already healthy situation, rather than curing a problem, the more positive his affective response to this change is.

In Hypothesis 4 it was expected that remedial versus developmental change would moderate the positive relationship between change climate and attitude towards change, such that the relationship would be stronger for developmental changes than for remedial changes. This hypothesis could only be confirmed for the relationship between the change climate variable of change history and the cognitive attitude towards change dimension.

7.8 Discussion

The present study explored the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between change climate and attitude towards change. The change climate variables included in the research were psychological contract fulfillment, trust, and change history. The dependent variable of attitude towards change was conceptualized and operationalized as a multidimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive dimension. The moderating variable of type of change comprised the four dimensions of unplanned versus planned change, organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change and remedial versus developmental change (McNamara, 2006). The results of the SEM analyses exposed eight significant interaction effects, primarily for the type of change dimension of unplanned versus planned changes.

As hypothesized, the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and all three attitude towards change dimensions was stronger during unplanned changes than during planned changes. These results are in line with previous findings by Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009) and imply that in the rapidly changing world of work, the importance for organizations to walk the talk and to live up to promises is increasing. Particularly for organizations operating in an unpredictable and turbulent environment, and that are for that reason more frequently forced to implement rather unplanned organizational changes in order to keep up with competition, a focus on the management and fulfillment of employees' psychological contract will pay off in times of change.

The type of change dimension of unplanned versus planned change also moderated the positive relationship between trust and all three attitude towards change dimensions. However, contrary to what was expected, these relationships

were stronger during planned changes than during unplanned changes. These results are somewhat surprising, particularly because the concepts of psychological contract fulfillment and trust are closely related. After all, the fulfillment of perceived promises fosters trust among employees (Robinson, 1996). An explanation for the results could be that during unplanned changes, the trust that employees have in organizational representatives erodes because these representatives apparently failed to foresee the developments in the internal or external environment that made it necessary to react suddenly, rather than carefully planning ahead. This could temper the positive effect of trust on an employee's attitude towards change. Planned changes, on the other hand, contain the element of control by management. Thus, if the same management that adequately looked after the employee's interests in the past has now planned a change, the employee can feel confident that something good will come out of the change for him or her. Conversely, if distrusted management pro-actively initiates and carefully plans an organizational change, it may raise suspicion among employees as to whether their interests will be sufficiently looked after, provoking negative responses to the planned change as a result.

Another interaction effect was found for the type of change dimension of organization-wide versus subsystem change. The results showed that the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective dimension of attitude towards change was stronger during subsystem changes than during organization-wide changes. This makes sense, since subsystem changes are likely to be decided on by a lower hierarchical level of organizational representatives as compared to organization-wide changes. Although various organizational agents shape an employee's psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995), most of the promises that constitute the psychological contract are probably made – and thus potentially broken – by persons within the subsystem of the employee, such as the direct supervisor or unit manager. Furthermore, the results exposed a positive direct effect of remedial versus developmental change on the affective attitude towards change dimension, without being distorted by a significant interaction effect. This indicates that it is better to prevent a problem from occurring than curing it, in order to evoke positive feelings, moods and emotions towards the change.

The final interaction effect demonstrated that the relationship between change history and the cognitive attitude towards change was stronger during developmental changes than during remedial changes. An interpretation of these results can be that even though previous changes were implemented successfully, a remedial change implies some degree of inadequate management. After all, management has not been able to prevent a problematic situation from occurring, which can reduce the positive effect of a successful change history on an employee's attitude towards change.

Although no significant interaction effects were found for the type of change dimension of transformational versus incremental change, this dimension had a direct effect on the three attitude towards change dimensions. Thus, the more an organizational change is perceived as incremental, the more positive the employee's affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change will be. An explanation for this could be that employees perceive a gradual implementation of organizational change, for example the gradual optimization of processes or systems, as less detrimental to the status quo, which reduces the uncertainty about the consequences.

As McNamara (2006) noted, incremental changes are often not perceived as an organizational change by change recipients.

One of the key contributions of this research is that it examined how the strength of the relationships between antecedents and change recipients' attitude towards change differs for various types of organizational changes. As pointed out by Oreg et al. (2011), only a few studies have explored the mere nature or type of change as a potential influencer of employee responses to change. Bouckennooghe (2010), who conducted a narrative review on recent conceptual and empirical attitudes towards change literature published between 1993 and 2007, moreover concluded that attitude towards change has primarily been studied in an episodic change context, and he therefore called for more pluralism in the types of organizational changes in which attitude towards change research is conducted.

By adopting a snowball sampling approach, this study was able to include a variety of perceived types of organizational changes, including incremental, unplanned and developmental changes. The snowball sampling method also has some limitations, however, since it prohibits any comparison with more objective characteristics of the particular change, or the generalization of the results to a particular population or organizational context. Nevertheless, the advantages conferred by the inclusion of various perceived types of organizational change may well outweigh the disadvantages of the sampling approach.

In this research, the type of change classification was not an objective or weighted classification but was based on the change recipient's individual perception concerning the change. Thus, even though the organizational change was carefully planned by management, it may have been perceived as largely unplanned by the employees. Oreg et al. (2011) emphasized that in order to study the content (i.e. the type) of change, it is necessary to compare at least two different organizational changes, which "typically requires access to more than a single organization" (p. 36). However, employees' perception of the type of change can very well be assessed within a single organization, and even with respect to a single organizational change. Consequently, the assessment of employees' type of change *perceptions* might help to overcome the "greater logistic difficulties that studying the impact of content entail" (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 36). The change recipient's perception of the type of change could furthermore have more predictive value as to his or her response to the change than management's characterization of the change. The two perspectives may very well be at odds. Moreover, any discrepancy between how change recipients and how change agents classify the change may be indicative of poor change communication, limited involvement of employees in the decision-making process, or an insufficient awareness among employees about the organization's external context and the need for change. Insight into how change recipients typify the organizational change is therefore useful for those in charge of the change.

A second key contribution of the present research concerns its consideration of change climate as a determinant of the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of change recipients to organizational change. Most research on attitudes towards change antecedents has focused on change process variables, such as participation, communication, procedural justice and management support (Oreg et al., 2011). However, due to the increasing frequency of organizational changes in today's

world, organizational change should not be regarded as a series of separate events (Herold et al., 2007), but should be studied and managed in relation to simultaneously occurring and previously implemented changes. This emphasizes the need for the examination of change climate as an internal context conducive to change (Bouckennooghe et al., 2009). However, given the concept's recent emergence, divergent views exist as to what change climate is and is not, and which variables it does and does not comprise. As change climate in essence is a content-free concept (Rousseau, 1988), the application of Oreg et al.'s (2011) subdivision of the attitude towards change antecedents is helpful for future researchers to determine which variables underlie change climate. In our view, change climate should be operationalized with pre-change internal context-related antecedents, as the assessment of the change process (see e.g. Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2009) or of an individual's inclination (see e.g. Tierney, 1999) does not provide insight into the internal context that already existed, prior to the initiation or emergence of the change. The adoption of this perspective can help researchers to explore the unique influence of change climate on employee responses to change, regardless of the manner in which a change is managed or the dispositional characteristics of the employees. Furthermore, given the increasing frequency of change today, and given the increasing challenge that management is consequently facing to fulfill previously made promises, the examination of change history and psychological contract fulfillment in future change research can be of considerable value. This is particularly so since few studies so far have explored both concepts as potential antecedents of attitude towards change (see, for exceptions, Bouckennooghe & Devos, 2007; Van den Heuvel & Schalk, 2009).

Thirdly, this study contributes to the research on change recipients' attitudes towards organizational change by conceptualizing and operationalizing it as a multidimensional construct, comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. To our knowledge, until now only the studies performed by Oreg (2006) and Van den Heuvel and Schalk (2009) explicitly sought to simultaneously assess all three dimensions of change recipients' responses to organizational change. The present study not only demonstrated that the 3-factor model fitted the data better than the rivaling 1-factor model, and in doing so replicated Oreg's (2006) findings, but the SEM analyses showed that both the direct and the interaction effects of the predictors differed for the various attitude towards change dimensions. The consideration of only one dimension at the expense of the other two therefore seems incomplete.

Practitioners in the field of human resource management and organizational change should be aware of the relevance of positive change climate in today's rapidly changing world. If an organization successively experiences difficulties in achieving the intended and desired results through organizational changes, the management should start asking itself whether the organizational climate is sufficiently conducive to change. When evaluating the organization's climate or when rethinking the organization's common change management approaches, both top management and line management should ask themselves questions such as: 'do employees perceive that previous changes were implemented successfully?'; 'are employment relationships within our organization characterized by high levels of mutual trust?'; and 'does management make explicit efforts to manage and fulfill the

organizational promises as perceived by employees?' An evaluation of relevant change climate indicators such as psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history, can serve as an eye-opener and help explain why changes time and again fail to take root. As noted by Schneider et al. (1996), top management is responsible for the climate and culture within an organization. However, line managers play a crucial role in building trust by engaging in frequent dialogue with employees about the content and fulfillment of their psychological contract. This is particularly so since the balance in the social exchange relationship between the employee and the organization is influenced considerably by decisions and actions on the part of these middle managers. Thus, although the general framework for a change-conducive climate is likely to be built at the top, line management plays a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of the change climate on a daily basis.

The present study demonstrated how the perceived type of change moderates the relationships between change climate and attitude towards change. Most significant interaction effects were found for the type of change dimension of unplanned versus planned change. The strength of the positive influence of psychological contract fulfillment and trust on the employee's affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to an organizational change depended on the extent to which the change was perceived as planned. To maintain one's competitive advantage, organizations may be forced to frequently implement relatively unplanned organizational changes, particularly when they are highly dependent on or susceptible to sudden market, stock exchange or technological developments. As the results of the study show, an increased emphasis on the fulfillment of the psychological contract can pay off in such times of unplanned change.

The result of the analyses furthermore show that a successful change history, as perceived by employees, is positively related to an employee's affective and behavioral responses to the change. These results imply that if the implementation of previous changes was not successful, business leaders and change agents should carefully consider whether the introduction of a new change can count on sufficient support among employees in order to be successful. If an organization's change climate is negatively influenced by a poor history of change, a suitable approach could then be to first cultivate the change climate via other change climate variables, for example by placing greater emphasis on psychological contract management and trust generation. Another approach would be to prevent the organizational change from causing excessive consternation and disruption. As the results of this study show, employees' affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change are more positive when the change is perceived to be incremental, rather than transformational. Thus, by adapting the implementation approach to the extent to which the organizational climate is conducive to change, management may optimize the likelihood of positive attitudes towards change among employees.

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7.9 References

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8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The central research question of this thesis is: *how does the psychological contract influence the attitude of employees to organizational change?* To answer this question, three key issues have been addressed in the six studies that make up this thesis. The first key issue is whether the psychological contract can be considered a determinant of attitude towards change. The second key issue concerns the influence of pre-change and change antecedents on change recipients' attitude towards change. The third key issue centers on the role of mediators and moderators in the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change.

This concluding chapter discusses the main findings from the six studies for each of the key issues. Subsequently, the theoretical contribution of the research, the implications of the results, the research's limitations and the recommendations for future research are presented, followed by the practical implications of the research. This chapter will end with a brief overall conclusion.

8.2 The psychological contract as a determinant of the three attitude towards change dimensions

The issue here is whether the psychological contract is a determinant of the affective, the behavioral and the cognitive dimension of an employee's attitude towards change. The primary focus is on the organization-side of the psychological contract.

8.2.1 Main findings

The studies show that the psychological contract is directly as well as indirectly related to an employee's attitude towards change. First of all, the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was found to be directly and positively related to the affective (study 1, 4 and 5), the behavioral (study 4 and 5), and the cognitive dimension of attitude towards change (study 4 and 5). Secondly, it was found that the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract was indirectly and positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions via trust (study 2 and 3) and engagement (study 5). And thirdly, the content of the psychological contract was found to influence the employee's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question (study 2). Thus, it appears that employees compare perceived promises to the anticipated individual impact, benefits or harms caused by the change. The individual answer to the 'what's in it for me' question subsequently determines the employee's attitude towards change.

Concerning the influence of the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract on attitude towards change, no significant direct relationships

were found (study 1). Therefore, the main conclusion to be drawn is that the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract is positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of an employee to an organizational change, either directly or indirectly via trust or engagement.

8.3 Pre-change and change antecedents of attitude towards change

The second key issue concerns the role of antecedents other than the psychological contract in determining an employee's attitude towards change. Examining these antecedents is important to determining the unique influence of the psychological contract on employee responses to change. The present research applies Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis' (2011) model of change recipient reactions to organizational change to classify antecedents of employees' affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change. According to Oreg et al. (2011), antecedents can be divided into *pre-change antecedents* and *change antecedents*. Pre-change antecedents are independent of the change and exist prior to the introduction of a change. Pre-change antecedents thus refer to change recipients' characteristics or the internal organizational context. Change antecedents, on the other hand, do involve aspects of a particular change and can therefore refer to the change process, the perceived benefit or harm, or the change content.

8.3.1 Main findings

In the quantitative studies, the influence of the pre-change antecedents *trust*, *engagement*, *organizational commitment* and *change history* was examined. Trust was found to be directly and positively related to the affective (study 3), the behavioral (study 3) and the cognitive (study 3 and 4) attitude towards change dimension. However, in study 5 no significant direct relationship with attitude towards change was found. In study 6 a direct relationship with trust and the cognitive attitude towards change dimension was found, but the strength of the relationship depended on whether the change was perceived to be unplanned or planned (see the third key issue). Engagement was found to be directly and positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions (study 5). Organizational commitment turned out to be related to the affective dimension of attitude towards change, but contrary to what was expected, the relationship was negative (study 3). Thus, the more the employee was committed to the organization, the more negative his or her affective response to the change. Although unanticipated, Van Dam (2005) has found similar results, indicating that highly committed employees (both affective and continuance commitment) were "less positive toward changing their present working situation" (p. 253). Oreg et al. (2011) emphasize that these results highlight the difference between commitment to "the job and the organization's current mode of operation", or "to those who initiate and apply the change" (p. 29). The negative relationship that was found might

therefore be attributable to the fact that the present research conceptualized organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, involvement in and loyalty to a particular organization (Steers, 1977; Fenton-O'Creevy, Winfrow, Lydka, & Morris, 1997), rather than as commitment to specific change agents. Change history was positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions (study 6), although the strength of the relationship with the cognitive dimension was found to depend on whether the change was perceived as remedial or developmental (see the third key issue). According to the antecedent classification provided by Oreg et al. (2011), the four pre-change antecedents examined here (trust, engagement, organizational commitment, change history) all refer to the category of internal context. In other words, these antecedents are indicators of the internal context in which the change takes place. The results demonstrate that the more this internal context is characterized by high levels of trust, engagement, and a successful history of organizational change, the more positive the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees will be.

Besides the four pre-change antecedents, the quantitative studies also assessed the change antecedents *change information* and *perceived need for change*. Perceived need for change was found to be directly and positively related to the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change (study 4). Change information was found to be positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions directly (study 5) as well as indirectly via the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract (study 4 and 5) and the perceived need for change (study 4). Additionally, in study 4 trust was found to mediate the relationship between change information and the cognitive dimension of attitude towards change, while in study 5 trust did not mediate the relationship between change information and any of the three attitude towards change variables. These results demonstrate that pre-change and change antecedents cannot be regarded as independent antecedents. Both types of antecedents influence each other. For example, the information about the change (change antecedent) that reaches employees can negatively influence the evaluation of the state of the psychological contract (pre-change antecedent), and potentially decrease the trust (pre-change antecedent) in the organization when change information indicates that the organization is not considerate of the employee's individual interests.

The qualitative study (study 2) explored a managerial perspective on the factors influencing an employee's attitude towards change. Two core antecedent categories were identified that – according to managers – determine an employee's attitude towards change. These categories are the employee's perception about the change (i.e. 'understanding of change' and 'perceived need for change') and his or her subsequent answer to the 'what's in it for me' question (i.e. 'degree personally affected' en 'expected individual consequences'). Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrated that both pre-change and change antecedents influence an employee's perception of a change. The change antecedents identified by managers were 'communication', 'leadership' and 'involvement'. The pre-change antecedents referred to either the individual, organizational, or societal level. The antecedents 'personality' and 'tenure' were identified as change antecedents on an individual level, the antecedents 'change culture' and 'corporate culture' concerned the organizational level, and the antecedents 'national differences' and 'labor unions'

referred to a societal level. Finally, the qualitative study identified four antecedents that had the potential to reverse the relationship between the answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question and attitude towards change. This type of antecedent is referred to as an ‘overruling antecedent’. Although, from a theoretical perspective, a positive evaluation of the ‘what’s in it for me’ question is likely to cause positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change, the results of the study demonstrate that certain overruling antecedents have the potential to reverse this relationship. More specifically, ‘psychological contract fulfillment’, ‘trust’, the ‘ability to change’ and the ‘availability of alternatives’ can make an employee respond in a contrary manner to what one might expect, based on the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question, regardless of whether that answer is positive or negative.

The results of the qualitative study confirm the relevance of the antecedents examined in the quantitative studies. Antecedents such as trust, change information and perceived need for change turned out to be relevant predictors of an employee’s attitude towards change. However, complementary to the quantitative studies that are typically restricted by the variables included in the study, the qualitative study produced a more encompassing picture of the determinants of attitude towards change and the positioning of specific antecedents. As such, the conceptual model presented in study 2 provides insight into the process of development of the attitude towards change.

8.4 The influence of mediators and moderators on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change

The third key issue of this research centers on the influence of mediators and moderators on the central relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change. The mediating role of the variables *trust*, *organizational commitment* and *engagement* was assessed, while *type of change* was examined as a moderator variable.

8.4.1 Main findings

Besides direct relationships between the psychological contract and the attitude towards change dimensions, several indirect relationships were found. First, engagement was found to mediate the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three attitude towards change dimensions (study 5). Second, organizational commitment was found to mediate the relationship between the fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract and the affective attitude towards change dimension (study 3). Further, the mediating

role of trust in the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three attitude towards change dimensions was assessed. Although no mediating effect of trust was found in study 5, the results of study 3 demonstrated that trust mediates the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and all three attitude towards change dimensions. An explanation for these differences in outcomes could be that study 3 required respondents to select an impactful organizational change themselves, while the organizational change for which they needed to answer the change-related questions was predetermined by the researchers in study 5. The respondents in study 5 were instructed to answer the 'change information' and 'attitude towards change' questions while reflecting on a specific organizational change that was going on at that moment. This particular change sought to introduce a new way of working to enable employees to organize their work more flexibly and thus to create a better fit with their individual situation. Perhaps this change was not relevant or impactful enough for trust to be of influence on the employee's attitude towards change. Another explanation could be that employees perceived the organization-wide change in study 5 to be driven by decision making at a top executive level, so that the degree of trust in direct management did not play much of a role in determining their attitude towards the change.

In the qualitative study of this research, trust was found to mediate the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change (study 2). According to this same study, the 'what's in it for me' category mediates the relationship between the content of the psychological contract and an employee's attitude towards change. More specifically, the content of an employee's psychological contract influences the employee's perception about the degree to which he or she will be affected personally and what the expected individual consequences will be. These aspects subsequently determine the employee's attitude towards change.

Two studies have assessed the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and attitude towards change. McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional categorization of unplanned versus planned change, organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change and remedial versus developmental change was used for this purpose. The type of change dimension of unplanned versus planned change turned out to be the main moderator of the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. In study 1, the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective and cognitive attitude towards change dimension was stronger during unplanned changes than during planned changes. In study 6, the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and all three attitude towards change dimensions was significantly stronger during unplanned changes than during planned changes. Thus, psychological contract fulfillment is a stronger predictor of attitude towards change during unplanned than during planned changes. Furthermore, the positive relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective attitude towards change dimension was found to be stronger during subsystem changes than during organization-wide changes (study 6), and during transformational changes than during incremental changes (study 1).

8.5 Theoretical contributions

This research makes several contributions to the literature. First of all, it is the first research to empirically explore the influence of the psychological contract on the multidimensional attitude of employees towards organizational change. While limited in number, existing research on the psychological contract in the context of organizational change has mostly focused on how organizational change impacts the psychological contract (see, e.g., Kessler, Coyle-Shapiro, & Purcell, 1999; Chaudhry, Wayne, & Schalk 2009; Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2011). Empirical research on change recipients' responses to change as an outcome of psychological contract fulfillment is so far lacking, even though research on the consequences of psychological contract fulfillment has identified a wide range of affective, behavioral and cognitive work-related outcomes (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). In the same vein, organizational change literature has so far omitted to study the psychological contract as a determinant of change recipients' attitude towards change. As the review of Oreg et al. (2011) on change recipients' reactions to change demonstrates, most research on the antecedents of attitudes towards change has focused on "the manner in which change was implemented" (p. 31). Even research focusing on the influence of the internal organizational context on employees' attitude towards change has thus far not considered the psychological contract as a potential antecedent.

The second contribution of this research is that it conceptualizes and operationalizes attitude towards change as a three-dimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive attitude towards change. Contemporary research on change recipients' responses to change is dominated by labels such as resistance to change and readiness to change to represent such responses (Bouckennooghe, 2010). As advocated by Piderit (2000), research should focus on the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change in order to provide a complete representation of an employee's responses to change. Until 2007, only the study performed by Oreg (2006) explicitly sought to explore all three attitude dimensions (Oreg et al., 2011). The results of Oreg's (2006) study showed that antecedents of attitude towards change do not necessarily influence all three attitude towards change dimensions. Job security was for example only significantly related to the affective attitude towards change dimension, and information about the change only to the behavioral and cognitive dimension (Oreg, 2006).

The third theoretical contribution of this research is that it adopts Oreg et al.'s (2011) model on change recipient reactions to organizational change to categorize antecedents of the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to change. The present research examined the influence of both pre-change and change variables, and except for the sub-category of change recipient characteristics, all categories were represented by one or more variables. The pre-change antecedent category of 'internal context' was represented by the variables of psychological contract fulfillment, trust, organizational commitment, engagement and change history. The change antecedent category 'change process' was represented by change information. The change antecedent category 'perceived benefit/harm' was represented by perceived need for change, and the change antecedent category

'change content' was represented by type of change. While based on an extensive review of quantitative studies published between 1948 and 2007, Oreg et al.'s (2011) classification served as a useful and empirically grounded framework to cluster the attitude towards change antecedents that were examined.

The fourth theoretical contribution of this research is that it examines the moderating role of type of change in the relationship between pre-change antecedents (such as the psychological contract and trust) and attitude towards change. To date, only a few studies have examined the content of change (i.e. the mere nature or type of change, as described by Oreg et al., 2011) as an antecedent of change recipients' reactions to organizational change (Oreg et al., 2011). Even fewer studies have assessed the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between antecedents and outcomes in a change context (see, for an exception, Caldwell, Herold, & Fedor, 2004). Furthermore, Bouckennooghe (2010) stated that "attitudes have been mainly examined in an episodic change context", which was one of the reasons why he advocated more pluralism in attitude towards change research. In the present research, respondents could choose the organizational changes for which they answered the survey questions. This resulted in a considerable variety in the perceived types of change included in the research.

8.6 Theoretical implications

The results of the six studies presented in this thesis have several theoretical implications. First of all, the research highlights the importance of the perspective of social exchange theory in studying the employee attitude towards change. Blau (1964) sees social exchange as "reciprocal acts of benefit, in which individuals offer help, advice, approval, and so forth to one another without negotiation of terms and without knowledge of whether or when the other will reciprocate" (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000, p. 1396). Social exchange theory describes exchange mechanisms between the mutual implicit and explicit promises in the psychological contract. As the first in the field of applied psychology and organizational change, this research has shown empirically how well-fulfilled psychological contracts are related to positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change. Given the central role that the psychological contract plays in predicting work-related outcomes (Zhao et al., 2007), research omitting the psychological contract as an antecedent of employee responses to change is likely to produce incomplete results.

A concept closely related to the psychological contract is trust, which has frequently been studied in relation to attitude towards change (see, e.g., Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002; Oreg, 2006). While psychological contract fulfillment refers to the discrepancy between an employee's understanding of what was promised and the employee's perception of what he or she has actually received from the organization (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), trust refers to the employee's beliefs regarding the likelihood that the organization's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to the employee's interests (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The two concepts may therefore produce comparable results in predicting attitude towards

change, since from a social exchange perspective they both influence the perceived likelihood that the organization will fulfill its part of the deal. The direction of causality between the two concepts still remains unclear, however. Although trust is typically viewed as an outcome of the psychological contract, according to Guest (2004) it can also be seen as an input or a dimension of the psychological contract. The results of this research confirm that trust can be seen as both an antecedent (study 4) and as an outcome (study 2, 3 and 5) of psychological contract fulfillment. Furthermore, in study 4, both concepts accounted for variation in attitude towards change, while in study 5 only psychological contract fulfillment was significantly related to attitude towards change. Moreover, study 2 suggested a mediated moderation effect, by which psychological contract fulfillment fosters trust and trust in turn moderates the relationship between the core antecedent category of ‘what’s in it for me’ and attitude towards change. Study 6 examined the influence of change history on attitude towards change. The results demonstrated that if employees perceive that previous organizational changes were unsuccessful, their attitude towards an upcoming organizational change is more negative. So far only a few studies have examined the influence of change history on the attitude of employees to organizational change (see, e.g., Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007). However, the history of organizational change is likely to have a bearing on employees’ trust in management’s ability to successfully manage the upcoming organizational change, which consequently influences the perceived likelihood that the employee’s psychological contract will be fulfilled.

The second theoretical implication concerns the relative influence of pre-change and change antecedents on an employee’s attitude towards change. This research demonstrates that indicators of the general employment relationship and the internal context (such as psychological contract fulfillment, trust and engagement) are at least as important – if not more important – than classic change-specific variables (such as participation and management support during the change). Antecedents related to the manner in which change was implemented is perhaps the most frequently studied antecedent category (Oreg et al., 2011), but especially given the increased pervasiveness and urgency of change in today’s world (Guest, 2004), a constructive change climate is becoming steadily more important. While organizations used to implement changes primarily successively and with a relatively low frequency, today’s “permanently turbulent system” (Guest, 2004, p. 543) dictates that organizations implement an increasing amount of organizational changes simultaneously. Deals made between the organization and employees will need to be adjusted more frequently, without explicitly negotiating the new terms of the deal, resulting in increased uncertainty about whether the other party will continue to contribute to the social exchange. A healthy change climate can mitigate negative responses and catalyze constructive responses to the change. More specifically, an internal context that is characterized by mutual trust and psychological contract fulfillment diminishes the uncertainty about whether the other party will continue to contribute to the social exchange, in turn causing positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change. An increased focus by scholars on such internal context-related pre-change antecedents is needed to determine the most decisive determinants of attitude towards change. This does not mean that commonly studied change antecedents such as communication and

participation have become insignificant. However, the simultaneous examination of both pre-change and change antecedent can help scholars gain more insight into the relative importance of both types of antecedents and enable them to better explain and predict the variation in affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees during organizational changes.

The third theoretical implication concerns the multidimensional conceptualization and operationalization of attitude towards change, as proposed by authors as Piderit (2000), Oreg (2006) and Bouckennooghe (2010). In line with the results of Oreg (2006), this research demonstrated that the determinants of attitude towards change dimensions are not necessarily the same. For example, in study 4, trust only influenced the cognitive attitude towards change dimension, and in study 1 psychological contract fulfillment only influenced the affective attitude towards change dimension. The conceptualization and operationalization of attitude towards change as a multifaceted construct comprising an affective, behavioral and cognitive component can offer scholars more insight into the cohesion between the dimensions and the manner in which the influence of antecedents differs for various attitude towards change dimensions. Currently, “meanings, labels, and definitions of constructs referring to attitudes toward change [...] are used interchangeably” (Bouckennooghe, 2010, p. 501). The results of the present research imply that scholars should avoid using one-dimensional concepts such as resistance to change or readiness to change (both behavioral responses; Oreg et al., 2011).

The fourth theoretical implication concerns the critical role of individual sensemaking in the development of an employee’s attitude towards change. Organizational change, by definition, aims to benefit the organizational system as a whole, which does not necessarily mean that the organizational change is beneficial for each individual employee within that system. As study 2 demonstrates, the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question is – according to managers – a core antecedent of the employee’s attitude towards change. Indeed, as noted by Freese (2007), “the willingness to change is influenced by the judgment of the employee: whether or not he will gain from the new situation, and whether or not the content of the psychological contract is affected” (Freese, 2007, p. 14). Moreover, “when change is perceived as personally beneficial, change recipients exhibited a more positive reaction to it” (Oreg et al., 2011, p. 33). The conceptual model presented in study 2 shows that the individual perception concerning the personal benefits stemming from the change, i.e. the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me question’, is influenced by two factors. The first factor is the content of the psychological contract. Employees compare the predicted consequences of the change with the content of their psychological contract, and the positive or negative discrepancy determines whether they perceive the change as beneficial or harmful, respectively. Research to date does not provide much insight into how the psychological contract influences the perception and judgment of an organizational change. One exception is the study by Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999), which demonstrated that the nature of psychological contracts determines the employee’s perception about the legitimacy of the change. The results suggested that transactional psychological contracts, as compared to relational psychological contracts, were associated with lower levels of tolerance for poorly justified organizational changes.

The second factor that influences the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me question’ is the employee’s perception of the change. Clearly, change antecedents such as communication, involvement and leadership influence the employee’s perception and understanding of the change. However, pre-change antecedents such as the employee’s personality, the corporate culture and labor unions also shape the employee’s understanding of the change. Scholars should therefore acknowledge that sensemaking is also influenced by factors beyond the direct or immediate influence of management.

Another element shaping the sensemaking process during a change is change information (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). As the results of the studies 4 and 5 indicate, change information not only shapes the employee’s response to a particular organizational change, but also influences indicators of the employee’s general state of well-being such as psychological contract fulfillment, engagement and trust. Present *theoretical* models assume that factors such as sensemaking, information processing, emotion, schemas and coping behavior play a mediating role in the development of change recipients’ responses to organizational change (George & Jones, 2001; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). However, many *empirical* models, which are often based on quantitative cross-sectional research, examine such factors solely as direct antecedents of attitude towards change (Oreg, 2006; Oreg et al., 2011). By doing so, scholars ignore that pre-change and change antecedents can also influence each other, and they therefore oversimplify the process through which affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change develop (see, e.g., the model presented in study 2).

The fifth theoretical implication also concerns the process through which an employee’s attitude towards change develops. The distinction made in the qualitative study between influencing variables and overruling variables can be of considerable value for future research. Most research to date has attempted to expose either the direct or indirect influence of a set of independent variables on the affective, behavioral or cognitive responses to organizational change. This has led to the identification of numerous antecedents concerning the characteristics of the change recipient, the internal context, the change process, the perceived benefit or harm caused by a change, and the content of the particular change (Oreg et al., 2011). As more and more antecedents of attitude towards change are identified by scientific research, the need to separate out the decisive antecedents increases. The present research demonstrates that even if communication, involvement and personality are associated with a positive evaluation of the change (i.e. a positive answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question), overruling variables can result in a negative attitude towards change. Overruling variables such as psychological contract fulfillment, trust, the ability to change and the availability of alternatives are therefore crucial determinants of the eventual responses of employees towards organizational change. Examination of the overruling potential of such variables could explain why employees can have a negative attitude towards change, even if the change is perceived to be beneficial for them.

The sixth theoretical implication concerns the moderating role of the perceived type of change on the relationship between antecedents and attitude towards change. The results of this research demonstrate that the influence of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history on the attitude of employees towards

organizational change depends on the type of organizational change. Particularly the extent to which the change was perceived as planned by management turned out to be an important moderating variable. During relatively unplanned changes, low levels of trust and psychological contract fulfillment are more detrimental for employee responses towards the change than during carefully planned changes. Unplanned changes hold the element of surprise and are accompanied by less predictability concerning the process and outcome of the change, at least in the initial phase of the change. Unplanned changes are therefore likely to generate more uncertainty among employees than planned changes.

Overall, the results regarding the moderating role of type of change imply that if type of change is neglected, the influence of antecedents on change recipients' attitude towards change is potentially under- or over-estimated. Furthermore, the results imply that relationships that were found in prior research, primarily conducted in a planned change context (Bouckenooghe, 2010), might turn out different when examined in for example an unplanned or incremental change context. The consideration of different types of change is also necessary, as the speed and flexibility of an organization's response to change become increasingly important for its competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). This development is likely to cause an alteration in the customary type of organizational change. For example, organizations active in increasingly turbulent and rapidly changing environments might very well be forced more often to implement largely unplanned changes, simply because they are caught up by sudden developments in their environment, such as the launch of innovative products developed by competitors. In the same vein, because of the increasing frequency with which organizational change occurs, change is likely to become more continuous, rather than episodic. These examples emphasize the need for a careful consideration of type of change by scholars, in order to gain insight into how relationships between antecedents and attitude towards change differ for various types of organizational changes.

Oreg et al. (2011) point out that the lack of research on the content of change (i.e., type of change) "is likely influenced by the greater logistic difficulties that studying the impact of content entail. To study content, at least two organizational changes need to be compared" (p. 36). In the present research (except for study 5), respondents could personally select the most important organizational change that was either taking place concurrently with the survey or that would take place in the near future. The results showed considerable variety in responses along McNamara's (2006) four type of change dimensions. An explanation for this variety could be that respondents had selected changes that differ considerably from each other. However, it could also be that a similar change was selected, but that this change was *perceived* in different ways. In most quantitative research, the type of organizational change is defined by the researchers, often based on characterizations provided by the management. However, the change recipients' perceptions of the degree to which the change was planned, organization-wide, transformational or remedial might very well differ from the view of an outsider (i.e. researcher) or the view of management. Thus, the logistical challenges of studying the role of type of change (e.g., securing access to multiple organizations to include multiple organizational changes, as described by Oreg et al., 2011) can be diminished by including type of change as a change recipient's perception rather than as (or in addition to) a

managerial or researcher's perspective. Moreover, a change recipient's perception of the type of change might be an even stronger predictor for his or her attitude towards change than the 'objective' type of change defined by the researcher or management.

The seventh implication concerns the adoption of the type of change conceptualization developed by McNamara (2006). As Bouckennooghe (2010) explains, "type of change refers to the character of the change under which the attitude emerges" (p. 511). However, over the years various classifications have emerged, all seeking to adequately capture the potential variety of this 'character'. Type of change has for example been described in terms of planned and emergent change (see, e.g., Bamford & Forrester, 2003), developmental, transitional and transformational change (Ackerman, 1997), and episodic and continuous change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Bouckennooghe (2010) used a combination of terms and distinguished between "top-down driven, planned, and transformational change against bottom-up driven, emergent, and incremental change" (p. 511). While obviously inspired by the classifications mentioned earlier, McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional classification serves as a more encompassing framework that does justice to the large variety of changes that occur. The results of study 6 for example demonstrated that if employees typify the change as incremental rather than transformational, their affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change are more positive. Likewise, if a change is meant to further develop an already healthy situation, the affective responses of employees to change are more positive than if a change serves to remedy a problematic situation. Since other classifications do not distinguish such characteristics of the change, the findings on relationships between antecedents and employees' attitude towards change might be biased. The adoption of McNamara's (2006) type of change classification could help scholars gain more in-depth insight into the direct or moderating influence of type of change on the attitude of employees towards organizational changes.

8.7 Limitations

The main limitation of this research concerns the cross-sectional character of the studies. Data were collected at one point in time. As stated in the introductory chapter, the main focus of this research was on exploration, since there have only been a few theoretical hints so far that the psychological contract could influence employees' attitude towards change. Although cross-sectional studies "can accomplish the aim of exploration or description" (Baker, 1999, p. 91), a final answer on the causal order in the significant relationships between variables cannot yet be provided. Especially during lengthy organizational change programs, the attitudes of employees are likely to vary across time. The triggers for such attitude changes can be diverse. Negative media coverage or sudden announcements by management about concrete objectives or interventions are examples of potential triggers.

A second limitation of the present research is that all data were self-reported. Obviously, self-report data are a valuable source of insight into an individual's perception of organizational practices and internal organizational context. This is

especially so since employees' perceptions of these aspects will be more closely associated with their attitude than the actual organizational practices or the internal organizational context as perceived by management or colleagues. Moreover, concepts such as the psychological contract can only be assessed by self-reports, as it is an individual's belief by definition. However, as noted by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003), self-report data can be biased when "the respondent providing the measure of the predictor and criterion variable is the same person" (p. 881), for example because respondents will try to be consistent and rational in their responses or because the respondents' implicit theories and presumed covariation between variables influence their responses. Self-report data are furthermore prone to social desirability and positive reflection on one's own knowledge, beliefs and opinions (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Consider for example the measurement of the psychological contract. Especially when assessing the employee-side of the psychological contract, self-report methods can cause socially desirable responses (De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003). In study 1 of this research, employees evaluated the fulfillment of their own promises significantly higher than the fulfillment of the organization's promises. Likewise, in a longitudinal study on the impact of organizational change on the psychological contract, Freese et al. (2011) found that the change process did not affect the employee-side of the psychological contract whereas the organization-side was considerably affected.

The third limitation of the research concerns the considerable variety of organizational changes that were considered. Driven by the explorative nature of this research, most studies aimed to include a variety of changes. In all studies except study 5, the respondents were asked to select a change for which they answered the change-specific questions. As a result, the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change was assessed for various types of organizational change. This approach helped the exploration of the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change. However, as study 1 and study 6 demonstrated, type of change can moderate the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change. Furthermore, two different changes that were both characterized by respondents as, for example, a planned remedial change, can still differ considerably from each other. Even a single straightforward change may be characterized differently by respondents. The decision to let respondents choose the organizational change for which to answer the change-related questions makes it hard to control for all characteristics of the changes, and this hampered the ability to determine the unique influence of type of change on the relations and concepts under study.

The fourth limitation of the research is that the role of job security in predicting an employee's attitude towards change was not explicitly examined. This would have been valuable, especially since most data of this research were collected during the global financial crisis in 2009 and 2010. In this period many organizations announced redundancies, which obviously harmed the perception of job security among employees. Various empirical studies demonstrate that perceptions of job security result in more positive responses to an organizational change (see, e.g., Oreg, 2006; Gaertner, 1989; Johnson, Bernhagen, Miller, & Allen, 1996). Moreover, job security is generally considered and demonstrated to be a central element of an employee's psychological contract (see, e.g., Cavanaugh & Noe, 1999; Cassar &

Briner, 2011). However, because constant change has become the norm in today's world, the central positioning of job security in employees' psychological contract, as well as the value employees attach to job security, is likely to be changing. Baruch and Hind (1999), for example, state that job security in many of the – what they call – 'new psychological contracts' is no longer a central feature. They argue that "most of the new psychological contracts deal with situations where there are no long-term contracts but a commitment on the part of the organization to provide the employees with training and development, in order to develop a 'portable portfolio' of skills" (p. 299). Given this development it is interesting to examine how perceptions of job security and the value employees attach to job security influence their attitude towards change. It would furthermore be valuable to examining the overruling potential of job security. As discussed in study 2, the availability of alternatives is a factor that can overrule an employee's evaluation of the change. This implies that even when an employee's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question is negative and the change is thus expected to be harmful for the employee, poor labor market conditions can still cause the employee to adopt a constructive attitude towards the change. However, if employees do in fact attach lower value to job-security, bad labor market conditions will have less impact on attitudes towards change. All in all, the extent to which job security is a central feature of an employee's psychological contract, can expected to be of considerable influence on his or her attitude towards change. The inclusion of job security in future research on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change is therefore strongly recommended.

A final limitation concerns the dimensionality of the attitude towards change construct. Although the reliabilities of the three dimensions of the attitude towards change construct were good, the three attitude dimensions showed fairly high correlations in all studies. The results of the confirmatory factor analyses that were conducted to assess the three-dimensional composition of the attitude towards change construct either confirmed the three-dimensional construct (see, e.g., study 1) or demonstrated that the three-dimensional construct better fitted the empirical data than the uni-dimensional construct (see, e.g., study 6). Nevertheless, since Piderit's (2000) advocacy of the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct, empirical examination of the construct is largely lacking. As the first scale to measure the three-dimensional construct was developed only recently (see Oreg, 2006), the scale has not yet been tested extensively, and suggestions to improve the scale have yet to be made, or alternative scales to be developed.

8.8 Recommendations for future research

This research contributes to understanding how the psychological contract influences an employee's attitude to an organizational change. However, the research results and the limitations of this research demonstrate that further research is needed to come to a full understanding of the relationship between the two concepts, the process through which employee attitude towards change develops, and the dimensionality of the attitude towards change construct. As indicated in the

introductory chapter, research on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change is still in its infancy. Several recommendations for future research can therefore be made.

First of all, further exploration of the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change in a longitudinal research setting would be valuable for several reasons. Obviously, it would enable researchers to draw conclusions on the causal relationship between the concepts, rather than merely identifying significant relationships between the two concepts, as is the case in cross-sectional research. So far, the majority of empirical ‘attitude towards change research’ has examined antecedents and consequences in a cross-sectional research setting (Bouckennooghe, 2010). Another argument to recommend longitudinal research is that it can yield more insight into the development of attitude towards change during change processes. Liu and Perrewé (2005), who developed a cognitive-emotional model of individual reactions to planned organizational change, have noted that research to date “has had a tendency to assume that people's emotional experiences do not change” (p. 276) during the course of the change. Although they completely rejected this assumption, an empirical examination of the development of these affective responses to change is lacking, as is any proof for the development of behavioral and cognitive responses. Besides the development of the attitude towards change during the course of a change, longitudinal research would enable scholars to gain insight into the development of the relationship between antecedents and attitude towards change dimensions; particularly if antecedents such as the content and fulfillment of the psychological contract were to be assessed prior to the announcement of the organizational change. This is especially relevant since organizational change itself influences the psychological contract as well (Freese, 2007). Thus, if the psychological contract is assessed after a change has already been announced or implementation has already started, it will be difficult to determine whether the state of the psychological contract was already influenced to a certain extent, for example by management statements, incomplete change information or rumors.

Secondly, future research could benefit from a further examination of the distinct influence of pre-change and change antecedents on the attitude of employees towards organizational change. Antecedents have so far been clustered in various ways. Bouckennooghe (2010) for example distinguished antecedents related to the context in which the change occurs, the process of the change and the content of the change. Holt, Armenakis, Feild and Harris (2007) added an additional cluster, namely individual attributes, which can explain why “some employees are more inclined to favor organizational changes than others may be” (p. 234). Oreg (2006) distinguishes personality and context-related antecedents, where the cluster context comprises variables that are either related to the change process or the anticipated change outcomes. Future research can benefit from a more comprehensive classification of pre-change and change antecedents (and their underlying subcategories), as provided by Oreg et al. (2011); especially since the relative importance of the clusters in determining an employee's attitude towards change is likely to shift under the influence of contemporary macro trends. The increasing pervasiveness and urgency of change (Guest, 2004) means that organizations change more often. In this context, “carefully following the prescriptions for successful

change implementation may still yield unsatisfactory results if extrachange factors, such as the workplace setting in which the change is occurring, are not considered” (Herold, Fedor, & Caldwell, 2007, p. 949). Pre-change antecedents such as trust, psychological contract fulfillment, engagement and commitment are relevant indicators of this workplace setting. Herold et al. (2007) also note that “organizations cannot roll out change after change assuming that each change is an independent event. The frequency and severity of the various changes have a cumulative effect on individuals in the organization” (p. 949), which implies that the assessment of pre-change antecedents related to the history of changes in the specific organization is likely to become more important in predicting and explaining the attitude of employees to organizational change. Thus, the assessment of both pre-change variables (such as trust, engagement and the psychological contract) and change variables (such as communication, involvement, change information and perceived need for change) can provide more insight into the relative importance of determinants of an employee’s attitude towards change.

The third recommendation for future research concerns the dimensionality of the attitude towards change construct. As noted in the various studies presented in this thesis, a first scale to measure the multi-faceted construct has only recently been developed by Oreg (2006), and only very few scholars have thus far adopted the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct in their empirical research (Oreg et al., 2011). As the present empirical research lacks an extensive examination of the construct, a thorough testing of Oreg’s (2006) change attitude scale is likewise yet to be performed. The general recommendation for scholars wishing to measure the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees to an organizational change would therefore be to adopt Oreg’s (2006) change attitude scale and to test it in various organizational and change contexts. For two specific additional reasons, the inclusion of the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct in future research can be recommended.

The first reason is that it could shed light on how psychological contract breach or violation influence the three attitude towards change dimensions. The present study conceptualized the “discrepancy between an employee’s understanding of what was promised and the employee’s perception of what he or she has actually received” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 231) as psychological contract fulfillment, because this acknowledges the potential of psychological contracts to be over-fulfilled. However, the negatively phrased terms ‘breach’ and ‘violation’ are the most commonly used terms in psychological contract literature. As Morrison and Robinson (1997) explain, psychological contract *breach* refers to “the cognition that one’s organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within one’s psychological contract in a manner commensurate with one’s contributions” (p. 230), while psychological contract *violation* refers to “the emotional and affective state that may, under certain conditions, follow from the belief that one’s organization has failed to adequately maintain the psychological contract” (p. 230). The two concepts thus refer to either cognition or affect, respectively. It could therefore be postulated that psychological contract breach is associated particularly strongly with the cognitive attitude towards change component, while psychological contract violation is related more strongly to employees’ affective responses to a change. Moreover, it

would be of considerable value to ascertain whether breach or violation causes the strongest behavioral or intentional response to a change.

A second reason to recommend including the three-dimensional attitude towards change construct in future research is that more insight is needed as to the potential ambivalence between affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change (Piderit, 2000). The conceptual model presented in the qualitative study of this research (study 2) nicely illustrates the ambivalence that can occur in times of change. Defining the answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question is primarily a cognitive process. Influenced by his perception of the change and the content of his psychological contract, an employee assesses to what extent the change might benefit him. This assessment may result in a negative cognitive response to the change, because the change – e.g. an impactful restructuring – is most likely to result in an official demotion, a restriction of job security and/or a devaluation of the employee’s total rewards package. However, the overruling category ‘availability of alternatives’ might very well cause a relatively positive – or at least constructive – behavioral response to the change, because the employee believes that the current economic recession and tight labor market considerably decrease his chances of finding a job elsewhere. He can therefore not run the risk of getting fired as a result of his negative behavior during the restructuring. Nor can he resign, since there are very few job opportunities in his region and industry, in particular when taking his level of education, experience and skills into account. Likewise, the overruling category ‘trust’ might very well cause a positive affective response, because the employee feels confident that his manager will do everything within his power to restrict the negative consequences of the restructuring to a minimum, and perhaps even create new job opportunities for him within another department that does not fall within the scope of the restructuring. To come to a better understanding of how ambivalence develops during change processes and what factors can cause ambivalence between attitude towards change dimensions, further longitudinal research on the multidimensional attitude towards change construct is recommended.

The fourth recommendation for future research is to further unravel the psychological contract construct in order to gain in-depth insight into the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. First of all, it would be valuable to determine the unique influence of the fulfillment of the six psychological contract dimensions on an employee’s attitude towards change. In the present research (specifically in study 4, 5 and 6), the average fulfillment score on the six dimensions of the organization-side of the psychological contract (i.e. job content, career development, social atmosphere, organization policies, work-life balance and rewards) represented the fulfillment of the psychological contract and was included in the analyses. However, it may be hypothesized that certain dimensions make a stronger contribution to the variance in affective, behavioral or cognitive attitude towards change dimensions. Under-fulfillment of the ‘social atmosphere’ dimension can for example be expected to primarily influence the affective attitude towards change dimension, at least on the short term. By contrast, an under-fulfillment of the more fundamental psychological contract dimension of ‘rewards’ can be expected to be strongly related especially to the behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change.

Secondly, it could be relevant to assess how the perceived importance of the psychological contract dimensions influences an employee's attitude towards change. If dimensions are important to an employee because of his private situation (consider, e.g., work-life balance or rewards) or professional ambitions (consider, e.g., career development or job content), an under-fulfillment of such a dimension is likely to lead to stronger reactions than if a dimension is irrelevant to a person. Similarly, if important psychological contract dimensions are expected to be harmed as a result of an organizational change, a more negative attitude towards change can be expected compared to a situation in which only dimensions that are fairly insignificant to the employee are negatively impacted. However, applying self-reported importance scores to fulfillment scores raises some methodological challenges. If, for example, the importance of a psychological contract dimension is assessed on a five-point scale ranging from 'very unimportant' (1) to 'very important' (5), should fulfillment scores then be multiplied with these same scores (i.e. 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) or should they be assigned a relative weight? And do we see the steps between scores as being of equal size or not, thus should we interpret such an importance scale as an ordinal or an interval scale? The latter obviously influences the relative weight that should be assigned to importance scores before multiplying them with fulfillment scores.

A third element concerning the recommendation to unravel the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change is to examine the relative influence of under-fulfillment, fulfillment and over-fulfillment on an employee's attitude towards change. Thus far, scholars have primarily assessed breaches (i.e. under-fulfillment) of the psychological contract and their consequences, while "little attention has been paid to the potential upside of functional employment relationships, that is, the consequences associated with agreement and psychological contract fulfillment" (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004, p. 53). However, it can be hypothesized that employees who see the organization as over-fulfilling its promises perceive some sort of an emotional bank account or buffer that mitigates immediate negative responses to the organizational change. This can either be because the over-fulfillment fosters the trust of employees in the organization, causing them to believe that eventually something good will come out of the change, or because the employee feels obliged to reciprocate in order to restore the balance in the exchange as presumed by social exchange theory (Homans, 1958).

8.9 Practical implications

Besides its contribution to science, this thesis aims to be of value to practitioners, especially to those responsible for deciding which change management and communication approaches to adopt and what interventions to implement. This requires an in-depth knowledge of which antecedents determine employee responses to change and which antecedents can be influenced by management. At the same time, when reviewing these practical implications, practitioners should be aware that the world of work is changing. In today's competitive labor markets, employment relationships are becoming increasingly personalized and tailored to the individual

needs of employees (Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009). Ongoing technological advances compel organizations to respond immediately to their rapidly changing environment in order to maintain competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). Social media have acquired a central role in the professional and personal lives of employees, and have proven capable of mobilizing large groups of people. Time and location no longer impose restrictions on acquiring information. After all, mobile devices provide employees access to information wherever and whenever they want.

Building on these trends, the following section discusses four main practical implications of the results. These implications do not represent a blueprint for generating positive attitudes towards change, nor do they necessarily apply to each organizational or change context. Nevertheless, the implications aim to get several relevant messages across, and by doing so, primarily aim to enable practitioners to evaluate whether their (change-) management approaches are in tune with the contemporary needs of the organization and its employees.

A change-conducive climate characterized by psychological contract fulfillment, trust and engagement is becoming increasingly important in generating positive attitudes towards change.

The first practical implication concerns the distinction that can be made between (1) predictors of attitude towards change reflecting the internal organizational context that existed prior to the introduction of the organizational change (e.g. psychological contract fulfillment, trust and engagement) and (2) predictors that are related to the organizational change itself (e.g. change information and the perceived need for the change). Typically, change management is presumed to be a series of linear steps that will yield positive outcomes if implemented properly (Herold et al., 2007). In the last decades, the focus has therefore been primarily on ‘traditional’ *change antecedents* (i.e. factors related to the change itself) such as proper change communication performed by change managers and the involvement of employees in the decision making and implementation process. However, given today’s constantly changing global environment, organizations continuously need to change and restructure in order to remain competitive (Cavanaugh & Noe, 1999). This development forces organizations to adopt “a broader and more time and setting-sensitive approach to change management” (Herold et al., 2007, p. 949). *Pre-change antecedents* (i.e. the factors that already existed prior to the introduction of an organizational change) related to the internal organizational context will therefore become more important in future change implementation processes. The reactive character and urgency of today’s organizational changes put a greater premium on mutual trust in the employment relationship. Practitioners should be aware that colleagues and managers in the direct work environment of the employee are most influential in the creation of mutual trust in the employment relationship, simply because most implicit and explicit promises are made and fulfilled (or breached) in this immediate environment. Because careful psychological contract management fosters trust and engagement among employees, emphasis on the fulfillment of employees’ psychological contracts in relatively stable times can build a cognitive-emotional buffer that prevents impulsive negative responses during the first stage of

organizational change. This is especially important since these first stages are often characterized by incomplete or incorrect information. High levels of trust and engagement can then mitigate the negative effects of incomplete information and rumors. However, careful psychological contract management should not only be on the agenda of practitioners during stable times. Contrary to what many practitioners instinctively presume, turbulent times of organizational change in particular serve as a breeding ground for trust. After all, “another’s trustworthiness can be demonstrated only when exchange occurs without the explicit “quid pro quo” of transactions” (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1397). Thus, a strong and sincere emphasis on psychological contract management in relatively stable times as well as during turbulent organizational changes can cultivate a change-conducive climate characterized by trust and engagement.

Change information contributing to a realistic change perception and answering of the ‘what’s in it for me’ question facilitates constructive attitudes towards change and a change-conducive organizational climate.

The second practical implication of the research results concerns the influence of the sensemaking process on an employee’s attitude towards change. In their work on the role of sensemaking in the assessment of change, Bartunek et al. (2006) noted that “recipients’ impressions of an intervention may be both consistent with and diverge from what change agents intend” (p. 202). Even if a change is carefully planned by management, change recipients may perceive it as unplanned due to inadequate communication or general skepticism. As demonstrated in this research, how employees typify an organizational change influences their attitude towards the change. For example, psychological contract fulfillment and trust are significantly stronger predictors of an employee’s attitude towards change if the employee perceives the change as unplanned rather than planned. In the same vein, employees’ affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to a change are more positive if they characterize the change as incremental, rather than transformational. This implies that common change management practices that are known to be effective during planned changes may yield less strong or even opposite (i.e. negative) responses when applied in a change that is perceived to be unplanned. Thus, the effectiveness of change management practices depends on how employees characterize the change. Practitioners should therefore have insight into how employees perceive and characterize an organizational change. Only then can adequate and effective interventions be determined.

Numerous factors influence the employee’s perception of the change and the subsequent answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question. While some of these factors, such as the organizational culture and the personality of employees, are hard to influence by managerial practices (at least on the short term), other factors such as communication and employee involvement are a matter of management decisions and the availability of resources. One of the most crucial factors influencing the sensemaking process is change information. Change information not only influences how employees perceive a change, it also shapes the perceived fulfillment of the psychological contract, the employee’s engagement and the employee’s trust in the

organization and its management. Practitioners should therefore realize that providing and facilitating proper change information not only generates more positive attitudes towards the particular organizational change, but that it also contributes to the creation (or maintenance) of a change-conducive organizational climate.

Practitioners often struggle with the challenge of translating high-level communication strategies into concrete practices. In accordance with the results of this research, proper change information should at all times contribute to (1) a change recipient's realistic perceptions of the change characteristics, the change process and the objectives of the change, as well as to (2) a change recipient's individual answering of the 'what's in it for me' question. In times of change, practitioners can benefit from critically assessing whether concrete communication practices meet these two criteria. And perhaps even more relevant, it should be assessed whether this applies for all employees affected by the change, while taking into account their individual information needs and the diversity in employment deals and psychological contracts.

Insufficient attention for change recipients' affective and cognitive responses during organizational change leaves management with an incomplete image of employees' global attitude towards the change, which hampers the prediction of short term and long term consequences.

The third practical implication concerns the dimensionality of employees' attitude towards change. Often change management's attention is primarily focused on employee behavior, i.e. on observable responses to organizational change. As long as management does not receive complaints, does not notice increases in sickness absenteeism, and does not perceive any active obstruction to the change, it will generally assume that the attitude of change recipients is positive, or at least not negative. However, in doing so management omits the affective and cognitive components of employees' attitude towards change, which are typically less easy and sometimes impossible to observe by colleagues and management. Nevertheless, negative affective and cognitive responses to change can cause undesirable general effects, such as a decrease of employee trust in management and employee morale (Paterson & Cary, 2002).

Moreover, in today's turbulent environment, "successful organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes, rather than merely overcoming resistance" (Piderit, 2000, p. 783). Business leaders and management should acknowledge the important role that affect and cognition play during organizational changes and should therefore place greater emphasis on these responses. The classic iceberg metaphor applies here as well: if emotions and thoughts are not expressed explicitly, it does not mean that they don't exist. The more management ignores or neglects to carefully consider the feelings and thoughts below the surface, the more unpredictable (potentially negative) employee responses towards the change become. Practitioners should be aware that the increasing frequency and severity of organizational change has a cumulative

effect on employees (Herold et al., 2007), which can make them feel fatigued by change (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006) on the long term.

Facilitating the dialogue with and between employees about their feelings and thoughts regarding the change is therefore crucial. However, the consideration of employees' feelings and thoughts during changes is likely to require a revision of common change management practices. For example, large-scale rollout meetings are not very suitable for an extensive elaboration on and discussion of an individual's ambivalent emotions (Piderit, 2000). Business leaders and managers should therefore realize that sincere interest in employees' emotions and thoughts about the change can require an altering of mindsets, beliefs and common change management and communication practices. After all, for many organizations it would be a major step to move towards the pro-active use of internal social media platforms and the interpersonal two-way communication between manager and employee as the primary means of communication in times of change.

By incorporating change management into operational management while adopting a psychological contract perspective, organizations can achieve individual-centered and personalized change management.

The fourth practical implication of this research stems from the previous ones, and concerns the governance of change implementations. For a long time, organizational changes were implemented as independent events, and as such steered by separate, relatively independent and often centralized project management teams. However, as organizations move towards a situation of continuous change, it becomes more likely that previously made promises will be broken or that simultaneously made promises contradict each other. Consequently, the likelihood of psychological contract breach increases, which negatively influences employees' responses to organizational change. Furthermore, given the trends described before, it has become nearly impossible for 'traditional change agents' to provide change information that is useful, timely, adequate and responsive to questions held by individual employees. This is particularly so since these agents have little insight into the increasing amount of personalized promises that are made between the employees and their direct managers, or into the feelings and thoughts of these change recipients. It is therefore increasingly unrealistic to expect from traditionally organized project organizations that they will manage to safeguard or even strengthen employees' trust and that they can adequately manage the psychological contracts of their employees in times of change.

Of course, in many change programs trusted change ambassadors are appointed and communication is cascaded down to the various hierarchical levels. Nevertheless, most change management and communication approaches and practices are centrally defined, events are centrally organized, and many communication materials such as newsletters and information brochures are centrally produced. Probably all change agents are aware that change information needs to be segmented and tailored to the various stakeholder groups. One size does not fit all. However, many organizations still try to segment complete employee populations into only a few stakeholder groups, often based on their hierarchical

level, while neglecting the personalized employment deals and the private situation of employees. Business leaders should start realizing that the individualization of employment relationships makes it nearly impossible for centralized and top-down organized change management to adequately tailor their change management and communication approaches to the increasing variety in individual needs.

Organizations can therefore benefit from decentralizing change management and communication. The direct environment of an individual employee can – compared to centralized project teams – better determine (1) how an employee perceives a particular change, (2) how an employee perceives the internal context in which the change takes place, (3) which practices contribute most to the employee's understanding of the change given the specific internal context, (4) what the psychological contract of the individual employee looks like, and (5) what the employee's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question is. Obviously, the major challenge for practitioners is to decentralize and personalize change management, while maintaining – and if possible increasing – its efficiency. It is therefore proposed here to incorporate change management in operational management while adopting a psychological contract perspective. Having insight into and a dialogue about the psychological contract of employees helps practitioners to properly design, manage and communicate organizational changes while preventing severe breaches of the psychological contract and while assuring continuous accommodation of the psychological contract to new situations. With this shift towards decentralized, individual-centered and personalized change management, the role of change agents alters. Whereas the traditional centralized change agent was “the prime mover who creates change” (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 373), the role of a decentralized change agent (i.e. the unit, department or team manager) becomes one of managing language, dialogue, and identity (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 381). An important first step for business leaders is therefore to align the psychological contract of these 'new change agents' with the responsibilities that come with their new role.

8.10 Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to explore how the psychological contract influences the attitude of employees towards organizational change. The research shows that the more an employee perceives that the organization has lived up to its promises, the more positive the employee's affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change will be. Moreover, the fulfillment of organizational promises fosters trust and engagement, which subsequently contribute to a positive attitude towards change as well. Deliberate attention for psychological contract management therefore not only pays off because it induces constructive responses to organizational change, but also because it cultivates an organizational climate that is conducive to change.

The research furthermore exposes the critical role that sensemaking plays in the development of an employee's attitude towards change. An employee's individual answer to the 'what's in it for me' question, i.e. the assessment of whether the change is personally beneficial or harmful, is a core determinant of the employee's

attitude towards change. The answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question is influenced by the content of the psychological contract, as well as by the employee’s perception of the change. This research shows that a wide range of variables relating either to the particular change, the individual employee, the organization or the societal context influence an employee’s perception of the change, and thus indirectly determine his or her attitude towards change.

The extensive range of antecedents exposed by this research and previous literature stresses the need for determining the decisive antecedents of attitude towards change. This research distinguishes influencing variables and overruling variables. Whereas influencing variables merely influence the change perception or answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question, overruling variables have the potential to cause an attitude towards change that is opposite to what one might expect, given the answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question. Psychological contract fulfillment and trust are two of these overruling variables. Thus, an employee who expects the change to be personally beneficial can still have a negative attitude towards change, if the relationship with his organization is characterized by mistrust and under-fulfillment of the psychological contract. The opposite applies as well: a well-fulfilled psychological contract and trust in management can make an employee respond in a constructive manner to an organizational change, even when this employee predicts that the change will adversely affect his personal situation.

Another finding of the research that underlines the need to identify the decisive determinants of attitude towards change concerns the role that type of change plays in the relationship between change climate variables and attitude towards change. The research shows that the strength of the influence of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and the history of change implementation on an employee’s attitude towards change depends on the type of the organizational change. As previous research has primarily been conducted in a planned change context, these results imply that scholars potentially under- or over-estimate the influence of commonly studied antecedents on change recipients’ attitude towards change.

Practitioners are advised to incorporate change management in operational management while adopting a psychological contract perspective. The constant dialogue about and accommodation of the psychological contract to new situations facilitates the design, management and communication of organizational change. Careful psychological contract management before as well as during organizational changes yields positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to the change.

8.11 References

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Summary

Primarily as a result of technological developments, the world of work is accelerating, with organizational change becoming increasingly pervasive and urgent. Consequently, “promises and deals made in good faith one day may be broken the next” (Guest, 2004, p. 543). We know from scientific research that employees who see these promises and deals broken are less committed to the organization, have less trust in management and are more likely to quit their job (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Robinson, 1996; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). However, so far little empirical research has been conducted on how these perceived promises and deals influence an employee’s attitude towards an organizational change. This thesis therefore focuses on this fairly unexplored field of research and examines how the psychological contract of employees influences their attitude towards organizational change.

The first main variable in this research is the psychological contract. The psychological contract can be defined as the employee’s beliefs about the mutual obligations between the organization and the employee (Rousseau, 1990). The obligations contained in the psychological contract stem from perceived explicit and implicit promises; and just like promises, the psychological contract may be fulfilled or not, to a varying extent. Psychological contract fulfillment therefore refers to the perceived discrepancy between what was promised and what is delivered (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

The second main variable in this research is attitude towards change. In literature to date, as Bouckennooghe (2010) illustrates, “meanings, labels, and definitions of constructs referring to attitudes toward change (i.e., readiness for change, resistance to change, cynicism about organizational change, commitment to change, openness to change, acceptance of change, coping with change, adjustment to change) are used interchangeably” (p. 510). The present research therefore applies the more all-embracing multidimensional attitude towards change construct to represent the responses of employees to organizational change. Attitude towards change can be defined as a tridimensional state composed of affective (i.e. feelings, moods, emotions), behavioral (i.e. actions, intentions to act) and cognitive (i.e. thoughts, beliefs) responses to change (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006; Bouckennooghe, 2010).

In this thesis, six studies are presented that each contribute uniquely to answering the central research question. To examine this research question, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used and both the managerial and the employee perspective were explored. Over 1500 respondents across multiple samples participated in the studies and the data were collected in various economic and industrial sectors across nine European countries.

Results

In the six studies, three key issues were addressed. The next part of this summary discusses the main results per key issue.

The psychological contract as a determinant of the three attitude towards change dimensions

The first key issue was to explore whether the psychological contract can be considered a determinant of attitude towards change. First of all, the results of the research showed direct and positive relationships between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and the affective (study 1, 4 and 5), the behavioral (study 4 and 5) and the cognitive dimension (study 4 and 5) of attitude towards change. Secondly, trust (study 2 and 3) and engagement (study 5) were found to mediate the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three attitude towards change dimensions. Thirdly, the qualitative study (study 2) showed that the content of the psychological contract influences the employee's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question in times of organizational change, which subsequently determines the employee's attitude towards change. No direct relations were found between the fulfillment of the employee-side of the psychological contract and attitude towards change. The main conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that a well-fulfilled organization-side of the psychological contract is related to more positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change, either directly or indirectly via trust or engagement.

Pre-change and change antecedents of attitude towards change

The second key issue was to explore which factors, other than the psychological contract, influence an employee's attitude towards change. A distinction was made between *pre-change antecedents* that are independent of the change and exist prior to the introduction of a change, and *change antecedents* that do involve aspects of a particular change (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011). In the quantitative studies, the variables trust, organizational commitment, engagement, change history, change information and perceived need for change were examined. Trust was found to be directly and positively related the affective (study 3), the behavioral (study 3) and the cognitive (study 3 and 4) attitude towards change dimension. However, the results of study 5 did not show a significant direct relationship with attitude towards change. In study 6 trust was found to be directly and positively related to the cognitive attitude towards change dimension, but the strength of this relationship depended on the type of change (see key issue 3). Engagement (study 5) and perceived need for change (study 4) were found to be directly and positively related to all attitude towards change dimensions. Change history (study 6) was also found to be positively related to all three attitude towards change dimensions, but the strength of the relationship with the cognitive dimension was dependent on the type of change (see key issue 3). Contrary to expectations, organizational commitment was found to be negatively related to the affective attitude towards change dimension (study 3). The fact that study 3 assessed affective commitment to the organization rather than commitment to specific change agents might explain the negative relationship that was found (Oreg et al., 2011). Change information turned out to be directly and positively related to attitude towards change (study 5) as well as indirectly via engagement (study 4), psychological contract fulfillment (study 4

and 5), perceived need for change (study 4) and trust (study 4). These results of the quantitative studies demonstrate that the more an internal organizational context is characterized by trust, engagement and a successful history of organizational change, the more positive the affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees towards a change will be. Furthermore, these results show that pre-change and change antecedents cannot be regarded as mutually independent antecedents, but that they influence each other.

The qualitative study (study 2), which assessed antecedents of attitude towards change from a managerial perspective, identified the employee's change perception and his or her consequent answer to the 'what's in it for me' question as the core determinants of an employee's attitude towards change. Both change antecedents (communication, leadership and involvement) and pre-change antecedents (personality, tenure, change culture, corporate culture, national differences, labor unions and psychological contract content) were identified as influencers of an employee's change perception. Finally, it was found that overruling categories (psychological contract fulfillment, trust, the ability to change and the availability of alternatives) have the potential to overrule the employee's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question, causing an attitude towards change opposite to what one would expect given the 'what's in it for me' answer. The results of the qualitative study not only confirmed the relevance of the antecedents examined in the quantitative studies, but also provided a more all-embracing picture of the determinants of attitude towards change and the positioning of specific antecedents in the process of attitudes towards change development.

The influence of mediators and moderators on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change

The third key issue was to determine the mediating role of trust, organizational commitment and engagement and the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change. Engagement was found to mediate the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three attitude towards change dimensions (study 5). Organizational commitment mediated the relationship between the fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract and the affective attitude towards change dimension (study 3). The results on the mediating role of trust were mixed. While no mediating effect of trust was found in study 5, the result of study 3 demonstrated that trust mediated the relationship between the fulfillment of the organization-side of the psychological contract and all three attitude towards change dimensions. An explanation for these differences in outcomes could be that study 3 requested respondents to personally select an impactful organizational change, while in study 5 the researchers had selected the organizational change for which the respondents were asked to answer the change-related questions. The latter organizational change may not have been sufficiently relevant or impactful for trust to be of influence on the employee's attitude towards change. In study 2 trust mediated the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. This qualitative study also showed that the core category of 'what's in it for me' mediated the relationship between the content of the psychological

contract and an employee's attitude towards change. Thus, the individual's answer to the 'what's in it for me' question depended on the content of the psychological contract.

In study 1 and 6, the moderating role of type of change on the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change was assessed. To examine type of change, McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional categorization of unplanned versus planned change, organization-wide versus subsystem change, transformational versus incremental change and remedial versus developmental change was used. The positive relationships between psychological contract fulfillment and the affective (study 1 and 6), the behavioral (study 6) and the cognitive (study 6) attitude towards change dimension were found to be stronger during unplanned changes than during planned changes. Furthermore, the positive relationship with the affective attitude towards change dimension was found to be stronger during transformational changes than during incremental changes (study 1), as well as during subsystem changes compared to organization-wide changes (study 6).

Contributions, implications, limitations and recommendations

Theoretical contributions

The theoretical contribution of the research is four-fold. This research is, first of all, the first to empirically explore the influence of the psychological contract on the multidimensional attitude of employees towards organizational change. Secondly, in line with the work of Piderit (2000), Oreg (2006) and Bouckennooghe (2010), attitude towards change was conceptualized and operationalized here as a three-dimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive attitude towards change. Thirdly, Oreg et al.'s (2011) recently developed model on change recipient reactions to organizational change was used to categorize antecedents. The influence of both pre-change and change antecedents on attitude towards change was assessed. Fourthly, the moderating role of type of change in the relationship between pre-change antecedents (i.e. psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history) and attitude towards change was examined.

Theoretical implications

The results of the present research have several theoretical implications. First, the research highlights the importance of adopting the social exchange perspective to study employee attitude towards change. From this social exchange perspective, the psychological contract is a reciprocal agreement in which the party that makes a contribution to the exchange relationship expects a return from the other party, so as to even out the exchange (Blau, 1964). As the first in the field of applied psychology and organizational change, this research empirically shows that well-fulfilled psychological contracts are related to positive affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change. Given the central role that the psychological

contract plays in predicting work-related outcomes (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007), these results imply that research omitting the psychological contract as an antecedent of employee responses to change is likely to yield incomplete results.

When adopting the social exchange perspective to examine attitude towards change, the concepts trust and change history are relevant as well. Social exchange in an employment relationship occurs largely “without negotiation of terms and without knowledge of whether or when the other will reciprocate” (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000, p. 1396). Trust in the organization that it will reciprocate is therefore required. The results of the research show that if employees trust their organization and its representatives, and if they perceive that previous organizational changes were successfully implemented, their attitude towards an upcoming organizational change will be more positive. So far, only a few studies have examined the influence of change history on the attitude of employees to organizational change (see, e.g., Devos, Buelens, & Bouckennooghe, 2007). However, the history of organizational change is likely to have a bearing on employees’ trust in management and its ability to successfully manage the upcoming organizational change, which consequently influences the perceived likelihood that the employee’s psychological contract will be fulfilled.

The second theoretical implication concerns the relative influence of pre-change and change antecedents on an employee’s attitude towards change. This research demonstrates that indicators of the general employment relationship and the internal context (such as psychological contract fulfillment, trust and engagement) are at least as important – if not more important – as antecedents of attitude towards change as classic change-specific variables (such as participation and management support during the change). Given how today’s “permanently turbulent system” (Guest, 2004, p. 543) compels organizations to implement an increasing amount of organizational changes simultaneously, scholars need to focus more on internal context-related pre-change antecedents to determine the most decisive determinants of attitude towards change. The simultaneous examination of both pre-change and change antecedent can help scholars gain more insight into the relative importance of both types of antecedents and enable them to better explain and predict the variation in affective, behavioral and cognitive responses of employees during organizational changes.

The third theoretical implication concerns the conceptualization and operationalization of attitude towards change as a multifaceted construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive component. Such a conceptualization and operationalization can provide scholars with better insight into the cohesion between the attitude to change dimensions and how they are differently affected by different antecedents. The results of the research show that the adoption of the multidimensional attitude towards change construct does justice to the variety in responses to organizational change shown by employees. The results of the present research imply that scholars should avoid the usage of one-dimensional concepts such as resistance to change or readiness to change (both behavioral responses; Oreg et al., 2011).

The fourth theoretical implication concerns the critical role of individual sensemaking processes in the development of an employee’s attitude towards

change. The results of the research show that the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me’ question is – according to managers – a core antecedent of the employee’s attitude towards change. Furthermore, employees compare the predicted consequences of the change with the content of their psychological contract. Subsequently, the positive or negative discrepancy determines whether they perceive the change as beneficial or harmful, respectively. Besides the content of the psychological contract, the employee’s perception of the change also influences the individual answer to the ‘what’s in it for me question’. This perception is influenced in turn by both change and pre-change antecedents, on an individual, an organizational and a societal level. Scholars should therefore acknowledge that sensemaking during organizational change is influenced by both change and general internal context-related factors that can be within as well as beyond the direct or immediate influence of management.

Furthermore, current *theoretical* models assume that factors such as sensemaking, information processing, emotion, schemas and coping behavior play a mediating role in the development of change recipients’ responses to organizational change (George & Jones, 2001; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). However, many *empirical* models, which are often based on quantitative cross-sectional research, examine such factors solely as direct antecedents of attitude towards change (Oreg, 2006; Oreg et al., 2011). As a result, scholars may neglect to see that pre-change and change antecedents can also influence each other, thereby oversimplifying the process through which affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change develop.

The fifth theoretical implication also relates to the process through which an employee’s attitude towards change develops. The distinction made in the qualitative study, between influencing variables and overruling variables, can be of considerable value for future research. As more and more antecedents of attitude towards change are identified by scientific research, the necessity to separate out the decisive antecedents increases. Further examination of the overruling potential of such variables could explain why employees can have a negative attitude towards change, even if they perceive the change to be personally beneficial.

The sixth theoretical implication concerns the moderating role of the type of change on the relationship between antecedents and attitude towards change. The results of this research show that the influence of psychological contract fulfillment, trust and change history on the attitude of employees towards organizational change depends on the type of organizational change. This implies that if type of change is ignored, the influence of antecedents on change recipients’ attitude towards change is potentially under- or over-estimated. Furthermore, the results imply that relationships that were found in prior research, primarily conducted in a planned change context (Bouckennooghe, 2010), may be different when examined in for example an unplanned or incremental change context. The consideration of different types of change is moreover important, given the growing importance of an organization’s ability to respond quickly and flexibly to internal and external changes for its competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). This development is likely to cause an alteration in the customary type of organizational change. Careful consideration of type of change by scholars is therefore needed in order to gain

further insight into how relationships between antecedents and attitude towards change differ for various types of organizational changes.

The seventh implication concerns the adoption of the type of change conceptualization developed by McNamara (2006). Various classifications have emerged over the years, all seeking to adequately capture the 'characters' of different organizational changes. However, McNamara's (2006) four-dimensional classification provides a more all-embracing framework for classifying types of change than previous classifications. The results for example demonstrate that if the change aims to further develop an already healthy situation, the affective responses of employees to change are more positive than if the change seeks to remedy a problematic situation. Omitting such change characteristics, as previously developed classifications do, can therefore yield biased results. The adoption of McNamara's (2006) type of change classification may help scholars gain more in-depth insight into the direct or moderating influence of type of change on the attitude of employees towards organizational changes.

Limitations

The limitations of this research are four-fold. First of all, all studies presented in this thesis have a cross-sectional character, and a definitive answer on the causal order in the significant relationships between variables can therefore not be provided yet. Secondly, all data gathered in this research were self-reported. Data may consequently suffer from biases relating to consistency motifs, implicit theories and illusory correlations or social desirability (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Thirdly, the general approach to let respondents select the organizational change for which they answered change-related questions (except for study 5) makes it hard to control for all characteristics of the changes, which may have hampered the ability to determine the unique influence of type of change on the relationships and concepts under study. Fourthly, in all quantitative studies of this research, Oreg's (2006) multidimensional attitude towards change scale was used. However, because the scale has only recently been developed, it has not yet been tested extensively in various organizational and change settings.

Recommendations for future research

The recommendations for future research are also four-fold. First, the further exploration of the relationship between the psychological contract and attitude towards change in a longitudinal research setting is recommended, as this may enable researchers to determine causality in the relationship between the two concepts and to gain insight into the development of this relationship over the course of a change program. Second, future research could benefit from the further examination of the distinct influence of pre-change and change antecedents on the attitude of employees towards organizational change in order to gain insight into the relative importance of pre-change and change determinants. Third, we encourage scholars to conceptualize and operationalize attitude towards change as a multidimensional construct comprising an affective, a behavioral and a cognitive dimension. The adoption of Oreg's (2006) multidimensional attitude towards change

scale could shed light on how psychological contract *breach* as a cognitive response and psychological contract *violation* as an affective response influence the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimension of attitude towards change. Furthermore, the multidimensional construct could provide further insight into the potential ambivalence between affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to organizational change (Piderit, 2000). Fourth, scholars are recommended to unravel the psychological contract construct in order to gain in-depth insight into the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and attitude towards change. It could be valuable to determine the unique influence of the fulfillment of the separate psychological contract dimensions on an employee's attitude towards change, to assess how the perceived importance of these psychological contract dimensions influences an employee's attitude towards change, and to examine the relative influence of under-fulfillment, fulfillment and over-fulfillment of the psychological contract on an employee's attitude towards change.

Practical implications

Besides its contribution to science, this thesis sought to be of value for practitioners. By discussing the practical implications of the research results, this thesis primarily aims to enable practitioners to evaluate whether their (change-) management approaches are aligned with the contemporary needs of the organization as well as its employees. At the same time, practitioners should be aware that due to several trends, the world of work is changing, which is of influence on these contemporary needs. In today's competitive labor markets, employment relationships are becoming increasingly personalized and tailored to the individual needs of employees (Rousseau, Hornung, & Kim, 2009). Ongoing technological advances compel organizations to respond immediately to their rapidly changing environment in order to maintain competitive advantage (Guest, 2004). Social media have acquired a central role in the professional and personal lives of employees, and have proven capable of mobilizing large numbers of people. Time and location no longer impose restrictions on the acquisition of information. Given these trends, in-depth knowledge of which antecedents determine employee responses to change and which antecedents can be influenced by management is essential.

The first practical implication concerns the increasing importance of a change-conducive climate in generating positive attitudes towards change. The reactive character and urgency of today's organizational changes place a greater premium on mutual trust in the employment relationship. Since careful psychological contract management fosters trust and engagement among employees, emphasis on the fulfillment of employees' psychological contracts in relatively stable times can build a cognitive-emotional buffer that may prevent impulsive negative responses during the first stage of organizational change. High levels of trust and engagement can then mitigate the negative effects of incomplete information and rumors. But also – or perhaps particularly – turbulent times of organizational change can serve as a breeding ground for trust, since “another's trustworthiness can be demonstrated only when exchange occurs without the explicit “quid pro quo” of transactions” (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1397). Thus, a strong and sincere emphasis on psychological contract

management in relatively stable times as well as during turbulent organizational changes can cultivate a change-conducive climate characterized by trust and engagement.

The second practical implication of the research results concerns the influence of the sensemaking process on an employee's attitude towards change. Employees' perceptions of an intervention "may be both consistent with and diverge from what change agents intend" (Bartunek et al., 2006, p. 202). The perception of a change can considerably influence the relationships between antecedents and attitude towards change and thus also influence the effectiveness of management interventions. The results of this research for example showed that the perception of the type of change can moderate the relationship between antecedents and attitude towards change. This implies that management interventions that are known to be met with positive employee responses during planned changes might draw less favorable or even opposite responses when applied during a change that is perceived to be unplanned. One of the crucial factors influencing the sensemaking process is change information. Providing and facilitating proper change information not only generates more positive attitudes towards the particular organizational change, but it also contributes to the creation (or maintenance) of a change-conducive organizational climate. In times of change, practitioners can benefit from critically assessing whether concrete communication practices contribute to (1) a change recipient's realistic perceptions of the change's characteristics, the change process and the objectives of the change, as well as to (2) a change recipient's individual answering of the 'what's in it for me' question. Moreover, practitioners should assess whether this applies for all employees affected by the change, while taking into account their individual information needs and the diversity in employment deals and psychological contracts.

The third practical implication concerns the dimensionality of employees' attitude towards change. Often, change management's attention is primarily focused on employee behavior, i.e. on observable responses to organizational change. However, when emotions and thoughts are not expressed explicitly, it does not mean they are not there. Insufficient emphasis on change recipients' affective and cognitive responses during organizational change leaves management with an incomplete image of employees' global attitude towards the change. This hampers the prediction of short term and long term consequences. Facilitating the dialogue with and between employees about their feelings and thoughts regarding the change is therefore crucial. However, business leaders and managers should realize that sincere interest in employees' emotions and thoughts about a change can require a considerable modification of mindsets, beliefs and common change management and communication practices.

The fourth practical implication of this research stems from the previous ones, and concerns the governance of change implementations. Business leaders should realize that given the trends described before, such as the individualization of employment relationships, it has become nearly impossible for centralized and top-down organized change-management to adequately tailor their change-management and communication approaches to the increasing variety in individual needs. It is therefore proposed here to incorporate change management in operational management while adopting a psychological contract perspective. Having insight

into and a dialogue about the psychological contract of employees helps practitioners to properly design, manage and communicate organizational changes while preventing severe violations of the psychological contract, and assuring the continuous accommodation of the psychological contract to emerging situations.

Samenvatting

Voornameijk als gevolg van technologische ontwikkelingen, is de wereld die ‘werk’ heet in een versnelling geraakt en is de doordringendheid en urgentie van organisatieverandering toegenomen (Guest, 2004). Als gevolg hiervan kunnen beloften en afspraken die de ene dag in goed vertrouwen zijn gemaakt, de volgende dag alweer verbroken worden (Guest, 2004, p. 543). We weten vanuit wetenschappelijk onderzoek dat medewerkers die ondervinden dat deze beloften en afspraken verbroken zijn, zich ook minder betrokken voelen met de organisatie, minder vertrouwen hebben in management en sneller geneigd zijn ontslag te nemen (Lester et al., 2002; Robinson, 1996; Tekleab et al., 2005). Echter, tot op heden is er slechts in beperkte mate onderzoek gedaan naar de wijze waarop gepercipieerde beloften de attitude van een medewerker ten opzichte van een organisatieverandering beïnvloeden. Deze thesis onderzoekt daarom hoe het psychologisch contract van medewerkers hun attitude ten opzichte van organisatieverandering beïnvloedt.

De eerste variabele die centraal staat in dit onderzoek is het psychologisch contract. Het psychologisch contract kan worden gedefinieerd als het beeld dat de medewerker heeft van de wederzijdse verplichtingen tussen de medewerker en de organisatie (Rousseau, 1990). De verplichtingen binnen het psychologisch contract komen voort uit gepercipieerde expliciete en impliciete beloften. Net als een belofte, kan ook het psychologisch contract in een bepaalde mate vervuld zijn. Psychologisch contract vervulling verwijst dan ook naar het gepercipieerde verschil tussen wat er is beloofd en wat er daadwerkelijk is geleverd (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

De tweede centrale variabele in dit onderzoek is attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Zoals Bouckennooghe (2010, p.510) aantoont, worden in de huidige literatuur betekenissen, labels en definities van constructen die allen verwijzen naar attitude ten opzichte van verandering (bv. bereidheid om te veranderen, weerstand tegen verandering, cynisme over verandering, acceptatie van verandering, aanpassing aan verandering) als zijnde onderling uitwisselbaar toegepast. Dit onderzoek gebruikt daarom het meer alomvattende multidimensionale ‘attitude ten opzichte van verandering’ construct om de reacties van medewerkers op een organisatieverandering te representeren. Attitude ten opzichte van verandering kan worden gedefinieerd als een driedimensionale staat bestaande uit affectieve (d.w.z. gevoelens, stemmingen, emoties), gedragsmatige (d.w.z. handelingen, intenties tot handelen) en cognitieve (d.w.z. gedachten, overtuigingen) reacties op verandering (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006; Bouckennooghe, 2010).

In deze thesis worden zes studies gepresenteerd, elk met een unieke bijdrage aan de beantwoording van de centrale onderzoeksvraag. Zowel kwalitatieve als kwantitatieve onderzoeksmethoden zijn gebruikt om deze onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden en zowel het perspectief van de manager als dat van de medewerker zijn onderzocht. Meer dan 1500 respondenten, verdeeld over meerdere samples, hebben deelgenomen aan de studies. De data van het onderzoek zijn verzameld in diverse economische en industriële sectoren in negen Europese landen.

Resultaten

In de zes studies zijn drie vraagstukken behandeld. In het volgende onderdeel van deze samenvatting worden de belangrijkste resultaten per vraagstuk besproken.

Het psychologisch contract als determinant van de drie dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering

Het doel van het eerste vraagstuk was om te verkennen of het psychologisch contract kan worden beschouwd als determinant van attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Ten eerste lieten de resultaten van het onderzoek directe en positieve relaties zien tussen de vervulling van de organisatiezijde van het psychologisch contract en de affectieve (studie 1, 4 en 5), de gedragsmatige (studie 4 en 5) en de cognitieve dimensie (studie 4 en 5) van attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Ten tweede bleken de relaties tussen psychologisch contract vervulling en alle drie de dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering indirect samen te hangen via vertrouwen (studie 2 en 3) en bevlogenheid (studie 5). Ten derde liet de kwalitatieve studie (studie 2) zien dat ten tijde van organisatieverandering de inhoud van het psychologisch contract de beantwoording van de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag beïnvloedt, wat vervolgens de attitude van de medewerker ten opzichte van verandering bepaalt. De voornaamste conclusie die uit deze resultaten getrokken kan worden, is dat een goed vervulde organisatiezijde van het psychologisch contract samenhangt met meer positieve affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties op een organisatieverandering. Dan wel direct, dan wel indirect via vertrouwen of bevlogenheid.

Pre-verandering en verandering antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering

Het tweede vraagstuk had tot doel te onderzoeken welke factoren, buiten het psychologisch contract, de attitude van een medewerker ten opzichte van verandering beïnvloeden. Hierbij werd onderscheid gemaakt tussen *pre-verandering* antecedenten die onafhankelijk zijn van de verandering en al voor de introductie van de verandering bestaan, en *verandering* antecedenten die juist wel betrekking hebben op aspecten van een specifieke verandering (Oreg et al., 2011). In de kwantitatieve studies werden de variabelen vertrouwen, organisatiebetrokkenheid, bevlogenheid, veranderhistorie, veranderinformatie en gepercipieerde noodzaak om te veranderen onderzocht. Vertrouwen bleek direct en positief gerelateerd te zijn aan de affectieve (studie 3), de gedragsmatige (studie 3) en de cognitieve (studie 3 en 4) dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Echter, de resultaten van studie 5 lieten geen significante directe relatie met attitude ten opzichte van verandering zien. In studie 6 bleek vertrouwen direct en positief gerelateerd te zijn aan de cognitieve dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering, maar de sterkte van deze relatie was afhankelijk van het type verandering (zie vraagstuk 3). Bevlogenheid (studie 5) en gepercipieerde noodzaak om te veranderen (studie 4) bleken direct en positief gerelateerd te zijn aan alle dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Veranderhistorie (d.w.z. de mate waarin de medewerker

van mening is dat eerdere organisatieveranderingen succesvol zijn geïmplementeerd door de organisatie en haar management) bleek eveneens positief gerelateerd te zijn aan alle dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering (studie 6), maar de sterkte van de relatie met de cognitieve dimensie was afhankelijk van het type verandering (zie vraagstuk 3). Organisatiebetrokkenheid (d.w.z. de relatieve sterkte van een individu zijn identificatie met, inmenging in en loyaliteit naar een specifieke organisatie) bleek in tegenstelling tot wat was verwacht, negatief gerelateerd te zijn aan de affectieve dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering (studie 3). Het feit dat in dit onderzoek de affectieve betrokkenheid met de organisatie is onderzocht en niet de betrokkenheid met specifieke vertegenwoordigers van de verandering, zou de gevonden negatieve relatie kunnen verklaren (Oreg et al., 2011). Veranderinformatie (d.w.z. de mate waarin de medewerker van mening is dat informatie over de verandering tijdig is ontvangen, bruikbaar was, voldoende was en de vragen over de verandering heeft beantwoord) bleek direct en positief gerelateerd te zijn aan alle drie de dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering (studie 5). Daarnaast was veranderinformatie indirect gerelateerd aan één of meerdere dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering via bevlogenheid (studie 4), psychologisch contract vervulling (studie 4 en 5), gepercipieerde noodzaak om te veranderen (studie 4) en vertrouwen (studie 4). Deze resultaten van de kwantitatieve studies laten zien dat hoe meer een interne organisatiecontext wordt gekarakteriseerd door vertrouwen, bevlogenheid en een succesvolle historie van organisatieverandering, hoe meer positief de affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties van medewerkers op een verandering zijn. Daarnaast laten deze resultaten zien dat pre-verandering en verandering antecedenten niet als onafhankelijke antecedenten beschouwd kunnen worden, maar dat ze elkaar beïnvloeden.

De kwalitatieve studie (studie 2), waarin antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering werden onderzocht vanuit het perspectief van managers, identificeerde de medewerker zijn perceptie van de verandering en zijn of haar daaruit voortvloeiende antwoord op de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag als de centrale determinanten van de attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Zowel verander antecedenten (communicatie, leiderschap en participatie) als pre-verandering antecedenten (persoonlijkheid, aantal dienstjaren, verandercultuur, bedrijfscultuur, nationale verschillen, vakbonden en psychologisch contract content) werden verondersteld de perceptie van een medewerker over een verandering te beïnvloeden. Tot slot bleek dat ‘overruling’ categorieën (psychologisch contract vervulling, vertrouwen, de mogelijkheid om te veranderen en de beschikbaarheid van alternatieven) de potentie hebben het antwoord van medewerkers op de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag te overrulen wat kan resulteren in een tegenovergestelde attitude ten opzichte van verandering dan zou kunnen worden verwacht op basis van het antwoord op de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag. De resultaten van de kwalitatieve studie bevestigen niet alleen de relevantie van de antecedenten die in de kwantitatieve studies zijn onderzocht, maar laten ook een meer alomvattend beeld zien van de antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering en de positionering van antecedenten in het proces waarin een attitude ten opzichte van verandering zich ontwikkelt.

De invloed van mediatoren en moderatoren op de relatie tussen het psychologisch contract en attitude ten opzichte van verandering

Het doel van het derde vraagstuk was om de mediërende rol van vertrouwen, organisatiebetrokkenheid en bevlogenheid evenals de modererende rol van type verandering op de relatie tussen het psychologisch contract en attitude ten opzichte van verandering te bepalen. Bevlogenheid bleek de relatie tussen de vervulling van de organisatiezijde van het psychologisch contract en alle drie de dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering te mediëren (studie 5). Organisationsbetrokkenheid medieerde de relatie tussen de vervulling van beide zijden van het psychologisch contract en de affectieve dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering (studie 3). De resultaten met betrekking tot de mediërende rol van vertrouwen waren niet eenduidig. Hoewel in studie 5 geen mediërende rol van vertrouwen werd gevonden, lieten de resultaten van studie 3 zien dat vertrouwen de relatie tussen de vervulling van de organisatiezijde van het psychologisch contract en alle dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering medieerde. Een verklaring voor deze verschillen in uitkomsten kan zijn dat de respondenten in studie 3 werden verzocht om zelf een impactvolle organisatieverandering te selecteren, terwijl in studie 5 de onderzoekers de organisatieverandering hadden geselecteerd waarvoor de respondenten de aan de verandering gerelateerde vragen moesten beantwoorden. Mogelijk was de organisatieverandering van studie 5 niet relevant of impactvol genoeg om vertrouwen van invloed te laten zijn op een medewerker zijn attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Verder medieerde vertrouwen in studie 2 de relatie tussen psychologisch contract vervulling en attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Tevens medieerde de centrale categorie 'what's in it for me' in deze kwalitatieve studie de relatie tussen de inhoud van het psychologisch contract en attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Oftewel, het individuele antwoord op de 'what's in it for me' vraag hing af van de inhoud van het psychologisch contract.

In studie 1 en 6 werd de modererende rol van type verandering op de relatie tussen psychologisch contract en attitude ten opzichte van verandering onderzocht. Om type verandering te onderzoeken, werd McNamara's (2006) vierdimensionale categorisatie gebruikt, bestaande uit ongeplande versus geplande verandering, organisatiebrede versus subsysteem verandering, transformationele versus incrementele verandering en probleemoplossende versus ontwikkelingsverandering. De positieve relaties tussen psychologisch contract vervulling en de affectieve (studie 1 en 6), de gedragsmatige (studie 6) en de cognitieve (studie 6) dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering bleken sterker te zijn tijdens ongeplande veranderingen dan tijdens geplande veranderingen. Verder bleek de relatie met de affectieve dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering sterker te zijn tijdens transformationele veranderingen dan tijdens incrementele veranderingen (studie 1) evenals tijdens subsysteem veranderingen in vergelijking met organisatiebrede veranderingen (studie 6).

Bijdragen, implicaties, beperkingen en aanbevelingen

Theoretische bijdragen

De theoretische bijdrage van dit onderzoek is vierledig. Ten eerste is dit het eerste empirische onderzoek dat de invloed van het psychologisch contract op de multidimensionale attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van organisatieverandering heeft onderzocht. Ten tweede is attitude ten opzichte van verandering hier in lijn met het werk van Piderit (2000), Oreg (2006) en Bouckennooghe (2010) geconceptualiseerd en geoperationaliseerd als een drie dimensionaal construct bestaande uit een affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve component. Ten derde is Oreg et al's (2011) recentelijk ontwikkelde model van de reacties van medewerkers ten opzichte van organisatieverandering gebruikt om antecedenten te categoriseren. Zowel de invloed van pre-verandering als verandering antecedenten op een medewerker zijn attitude ten opzichte van verandering is onderzocht. Ten vierde is de modererende rol van het type verandering op de relatie tussen pre-verandering antecedenten (d.w.z. psychologisch contract vervulling, vertrouwen en veranderhistorie) en attitude ten opzichte van verandering onderzocht.

Theoretische implicaties

De resultaten van dit onderzoek hebben diverse theoretische implicaties. Ten eerste onderstreept dit onderzoek het belang van het toepassen van het social exchange perspectief bij het onderzoeken van attitude ten opzichte van organisatieverandering. Vanuit een social exchange perspectief is het psychologisch contract een wederkerige overeenkomst waarin de partij die een bijdrage maakt aan de exchange relatie een tegenprestatie van de andere partij verwacht om zo de balans in de exchange weer te herstellen (Blau, 1964). Dit is het eerste onderzoek in de toegepaste psychologie dat empirisch aantoonde dat goed vervulde psychologische contracten gerelateerd zijn aan positieve affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties op organisatieverandering. Omdat het psychologisch contract een centrale rol speelt in het voorspellen van werkgerelateerde uitkomsten (Zhao et al., 2007), impliceren deze resultaten tevens dat wanneer empirisch onderzoek verzuimt het psychologisch contract mee te nemen als mogelijke antecedent van de reacties van medewerkers op organisatieverandering, dit waarschijnlijk incomplete resultaten oplevert.

Wanneer het social exchange perspectief wordt toegepast om attitude ten opzichte van verandering te onderzoeken, zijn tevens de concepten vertrouwen en veranderhistorie relevant. Social exchange vindt grotendeels plaats zonder expliciete onderhandeling over de voorwaarden en zonder de wetenschap of de ander zal reciproceren (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1396). Vertrouwen in de organisatie dat zij een tegenprestatie zal leveren is daarom noodzakelijk. De resultaten van het onderzoek laten zien dat wanneer medewerkers hun organisatie en haar representanten vertrouwen en wanneer zij van mening zijn dat eerdere organisatieveranderingen succesvol zijn geïmplementeerd, hun attitude ten opzichte van een aankomende organisatieverandering positiever is. Hoewel tot dusver slechts een beperkt aantal

studies de invloed van veranderhistorie op attitude ten opzichte van verandering onderzocht (zie, bv., Devos et al., 2007), is het waarschijnlijk dat de veranderhistorie invloed heeft op vertrouwen dat medewerkers hebben in het management en haar bekwaamheid om de aankomende organisatieverandering succesvol te managen. Dit vertrouwen is vervolgens weer van invloed op de gepercipieerde waarschijnlijkheid dat het psychologisch contract van medewerker zal worden vervuld.

De tweede theoretische implicatie betreft de relatieve invloed van pre-verandering en verandering antecedenten op de attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van organisatieverandering. Dit onderzoek toont aan dat indicatoren van de algemene arbeidsrelatie en de interne context (zoals psychologisch contract vervulling, vertrouwen en bevlogenheid) tenminste zo belangrijke – en wellicht belangrijkere – antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering zijn als klassieke veranderingspecifieke variabelen zoals participatie en management support tijdens de verandering. Omdat het permanente turbulente systeem van vandaag de dag (Guest, 2004, p. 543) organisaties voorschrijft om een toenemend aantal organisatieveranderingen gelijktijdig te implementeren, is een sterkere focus van wetenschappers op pre-verandering antecedenten gerelateerd aan de interne context nodig om zo de meest bepalende determinanten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering te kunnen bepalen. Het gelijktijdig onderzoeken van zowel pre-verandering als verandering antecedenten kan wetenschappers helpen meer inzicht te krijgen in het relatieve belang van beide typen antecedenten en hen in staat stellen om de variantie in affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties van medewerkers tijdens organisatieverandering beter te kunnen verklaren en voorspellen.

De derde theoretische implicatie heeft betrekking op de conceptualisatie en operationalisatie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering als een multidimensionaal construct, bestaande uit een affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve component. Een dergelijke conceptualisatie en operationalisatie kan wetenschappers meer inzicht geven in de samenhang tussen de dimensies en de wijze waarop de invloed van antecedenten verschilt voor de diverse dimensies van attitude ten opzichte van verandering. De resultaten van het onderzoek laten zien dat het toepassen van het multidimensionale construct recht doet aan de potentiële verscheidenheid in reacties van medewerkers op een organisatieverandering. De resultaten van dit onderzoek impliceren dat wetenschappers het gebruik van eendimensionale concepten zoals weerstand tegen verandering en bereidheid om te veranderen (beiden gedragsmatige reacties; Oreg et al., 2011) zouden moeten vermijden.

De vierde wetenschappelijke implicatie heeft betrekking op de cruciale rol van individuele interpretatie (sensemaking) processen in de ontwikkeling van een attitude ten opzichte van verandering. De resultaten van het onderzoek laten zien dat het individuele antwoord op de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag – volgens managers – een centrale antecedent is van een medewerker zijn attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Daarnaast vergelijken medewerkers de verwachte gevolgen van de verandering met de inhoud van hun psychologisch contract. De positieve of negatieve discrepantie bepaalt vervolgens of medewerkers de verandering als respectievelijk voordelig of schadelijk beschouwen. Naast de inhoud van het psychologisch contract bepaalt ook de medewerkers zijn perceptie van de verandering zijn individuele antwoord op de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag. Deze

perceptie wordt op haar beurt weer beïnvloed door verandering antecedenten en pre-verandering antecedenten op een individueel niveau, een organisatie niveau en een maatschappij niveau. Wetenschappers dienen daarom te onderkennen dat de interpretatie van een organisatieverandering wordt beïnvloed door zowel verandering gerelateerde factoren als interne context gerelateerde factoren en dat die factoren zowel binnen als buiten de directe en onmiddellijke invloed van management kunnen liggen.

Daarnaast veronderstellen huidige *theoretische* modellen dat factoren zoals interpretatie, informatieverwerking, emotie, schema's en coping gedrag een mediërende rol spelen in de ontwikkeling van de reacties van medewerkers op een organisatieverandering (George & Jones, 2001; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Bartunek et al., 2006). Echter, veel *empirische* modellen, die vaak gebaseerd zijn op kwantitatieve cross-sectionele studies, onderzoeken deze factoren louter als directe antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering (Oreg, 2006; Oreg et al., 2011). Door dit te doen, negeren wetenschappers dat pre-verandering en verandering antecedenten ook elkaar kunnen beïnvloeden, en daarmee oversimplificeren ze het proces waarin affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties op verandering zich ontwikkelen.

De vijfde theoretische implicatie is tevens gerelateerd aan het proces waarin de attitude van een medewerker ten opzichte van verandering zich ontwikkelt. Het onderscheid dat in de kwalitatieve studie wordt gemaakt tussen 'influencing' en 'overruling' variabelen kan van aanzienlijke waarde zijn voor toekomstig onderzoek. Terwijl wetenschappelijk onderzoek alsmaar meer antecedenten van attitude ten opzichte van verandering identificeert, neemt de noodzaak om de meest bepalende antecedenten te kunnen onderscheiden toe. Het onderzoeken van het overruling potentieel van variabelen zou kunnen helpen verklaren waarom medewerkers een negatieve attitude ten opzichte van verandering kunnen hebben, ook al wordt de verandering door hen als persoonlijk voordelig gepercipieerd.

De zesde theoretische implicatie heeft betrekking op de modererende rol van type verandering op de relatie tussen antecedenten en attitude ten opzichte van verandering. De resultaten van dit onderzoek laten zien dat de invloed van psychologisch contract vervulling, vertrouwen en veranderhistorie afhankelijk zijn van het type organisatieverandering. Dit impliceert, dat wanneer type verandering wordt genegeerd, de invloed van antecedenten op attitude ten opzichte van verandering mogelijk wordt onder- of overschat. Ook houden de resultaten in dat relaties die gevonden zijn in eerder onderzoek, dat voornamelijk in een context van geplande organisatieverandering is uitgevoerd (Bouckennooghe, 2010), mogelijk verschillend zijn wanneer ze onderzocht worden in een context van bijvoorbeeld ongeplande of incrementele verandering. Verder is het beschouwen van diverse typen organisatieverandering noodzakelijk, omdat de flexibiliteit van een organisatie en de snelheid waarmee ze kan reageren op interne en externe veranderingen een steeds belangrijkere determinant voor haar concurrentievoordeel wordt (Guest, 2004). Deze ontwikkeling veroorzaakt waarschijnlijk ook een verandering van het gebruikelijke type organisatieverandering. Het is daarom noodzakelijk dat wetenschappers zorgvuldig rekening houden met het type organisatieverandering, om op deze manier verder inzicht te krijgen in hoe relaties tussen antecedenten en

attitude ten opzichte van verandering verschillen voor diverse typen organisatieverandering.

De zevende implicatie betreft het gebruik van McNamara's (2006) conceptualisatie van het type verandering. Door de jaren heen zijn er diverse classificaties verschenen die allen tot doel hadden de 'karakters' van verschillende typen organisatieverandering te vangen. Echter, McNamara's (2006) vierdimensionale classificatie is meer alomvattende dan eerdere classificaties. Zo tonen de resultaten bijvoorbeeld aan dat wanneer een verandering bedoeld is om een reeds gezonde situatie verder te ontwikkelen de affectieve reacties van medewerkers op de verandering positiever zijn dan wanneer de verandering een probleem moet oplossen. Het buiten beschouwing laten van dergelijke karakteristieken van een organisatieverandering kan vertekende resultaten opleveren. De toepassing van McNamara's (2006) classificatie van type verandering kan wetenschappers daarom helpen om meer diepgaand inzicht te krijgen in de directe of modererende invloed van type verandering op de attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van verandering.

Beperkingen

De beperkingen van dit onderzoek zijn vierledig. Ten eerste hebben alle studies die in deze thesis worden gepresenteerd een 'cross-sectional' karakter, waardoor een definitief antwoord op de causale volgorde in de significante relaties nog niet kan worden gegeven. Ten tweede zijn alle data die tijdens dit onderzoek zijn verzameld 'self-reported'. Beïnvloed door consistentie motieven, impliciete theorieën en illusoire correlaties, of sociale wenselijkheid kunnen de data hierdoor in bepaalde mate vertekend zijn (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Ten derde bemoeilijkt de algemene aanpak om respondenten zelf de organisatieverandering te laten selecteren waarvoor ze de vragen gerelateerd aan een specifieke verandering invulden (behalve in studie 5) het controleren voor alle specifieke karakteristieken van de verandering. Hierdoor is de mogelijkheid om de unieke invloed van het type verandering op de onderzochte relaties te kunnen bepalen is mogelijk beperkt. Ten vierde wordt in alle kwantitatieve studies de multidimensionale attitude ten opzichte van verandering schaal van Oreg (2006) gebruikt. Echter, omdat deze schaal pas recentelijk is ontwikkeld, is deze nog niet uitvoerig getest in diverse organisaties en tijdens diverse organisatieveranderingen.

Aanbevelingen voor toekomstig onderzoek

De aanbeveling voor toekomstig wetenschappelijk onderzoek is vierledig. Ten eerste wordt het aanbevolen om de relatie tussen het psychologisch contract en attitude ten opzichte van verandering verder te verkennen in een longitudinale onderzoekssetting. Dit stelt onderzoekers in staat om causaliteit in de relatie tussen de concepten vast te stellen en geeft inzicht in de ontwikkeling van de relatie tussen de twee concepten gedurende een veranderprogramma. Ten tweede zou toekomstig onderzoek baat kunnen hebben bij het verder onderzoeken van de afzonderlijke invloed van pre-verandering en verandering antecedenten op de attitude van een medewerker ten opzichte van een organisatieverandering. Dergelijk onderzoek zou meer inzicht kunnen geven in het relatieve belang van pre-verandering en

verandering antecedenten. Ten derde wordt wetenschappers geadviseerd om attitude ten opzichte van verandering te conceptualiseren en te operationaliseren als een multidimensionaal construct, bestaande uit een affectieve, een gedragsmatige en een cognitieve dimensie. Het gebruik van Oreg's (2006) multidimensionale attitude ten opzichte van verandering schaal zou inzicht kunnen verschaffen in hoe een *breuk* van het psychologisch contract als een cognitieve reactie en *schending* van het psychologisch contract als een affectieve reactie de affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve dimensie van attitude ten opzichte van verandering beïnvloeden. Daarnaast zou het multidimensionale construct ons meer inzicht kunnen geven in de mogelijke ambivalentie tussen affectieve, gedragsmatige en cognitieve reacties op organisatieverandering (Piderit, 2000). Ten vierde wordt wetenschappers aanbevolen om het psychologisch contract construct verder te ontrafelen om zo meer diepgaand inzicht te krijgen in de relatie tussen psychologisch contract vervulling en attitude ten opzichte van verandering. Het zou waardevol kunnen zijn om de unieke invloed van de vervulling van afzonderlijke psychologisch contract dimensies op attitude ten opzichte van verandering te bepalen, om vast te stellen hoe de gepercipieerde belangrijkheid van deze psychologisch contract dimensies de medewerker zijn attitude ten opzichte van verandering beïnvloedt en om de relatieve invloed van onder-vervulling, vervulling en over-vervulling van het psychologisch contract op een medewerker zijn attitude ten opzichte van verandering te onderzoeken.

Praktische implicaties

Naast haar bijdrage aan de wetenschap, heeft dit onderzoek tot doel van waarde te zijn voor de praktijk. Met het bespreken van de praktische implicaties van de onderzoeksresultaten wil deze thesis professionals in de praktijk in staat stellen om te evalueren of hun (verander-) managementbenadering aansluit bij de hedendaagse behoeften van zowel organisaties als medewerkers. Tegelijkertijd dienen praktijkprofessionals zich ervan bewust te zijn dat als gevolg van diverse trends de wereld die 'werk' heet verandert, wat deze hedendaagse behoeften weer beïnvloedt. In de tegenwoordige competitieve arbeidsmarkten raken arbeidsrelaties steeds meer gepersonaliseerd en worden ze afgestemd op de individuele behoeften van medewerkers (Rousseau et al., 2009). Voorturende technologische ontwikkelingen dwingen organisaties om onmiddellijk te reageren op hun snel veranderende omgeving om zo hun concurrentievoordeel te behouden (Guest, 2004). Sociale media hebben een centrale rol verworven in de professionele en privé levens van medewerkers, en hebben aangetoond in staat te zijn grote groepen mensen te mobiliseren. Tijd en locatie begrenzen niet langer de mogelijkheden om informatie te verkrijgen. Vanwege deze trends is diepgaande kennis nodig over welke antecedenten de reacties van medewerkers op verandering bepalen en welke antecedenten kunnen worden beïnvloed door management.

De eerste praktische implicatie betreft het toenemende belang van een klimaat dat bevorderlijk is voor verandering om zo positieve attitudes ten opzichte van verandering te genereren. Het reactieve karakter en de urgentie van hedendaagse organisatieveranderingen doet een sterker beroep op het wederzijdse vertrouwen in de arbeidsrelatie. Omdat zorgvuldig psychologisch contract management het vertrouwen en de bevoegenheid van medewerkers versterkt, kan een focus op het

vervullen van psychologische contracten van medewerkers in relatief stabiele tijden een cognitief-emotionele buffer creëren die impulsieve negatieve reacties tijdens de eerste fase van organisatieverandering kan voorkomen. Vertrouwen en bevlogenheid kunnen dan de negatieve effecten van incomplete informatie en geruchten afzwakken. Maar ook – of juist met name – turbulente tijden van veranderingen kunnen als voedingsbodem voor vertrouwen dienen, omdat iemand anders zijn betrouwbaarheid alleen kan worden aangetoond wanneer exchange plaatsvindt zonder het expliciete ‘quid pro quo’ van transacties (Molm et al., 2000, p. 1397). Nadrukkelijke en oprechte aandacht van management voor psychologisch contract management in zowel relatief stabiele tijden als tijdens turbulente organisatieveranderingen kan een klimaat cultiveren dat bevorderlijk is voor verandering en gekarakteriseerd wordt door vertrouwen en bevlogenheid.

De tweede praktische implicatie van het onderzoek betreft de invloed van het interpretatie (sensemaking) proces op de attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van verandering. Het beeld dat medewerkers hebben van een interventie kan zowel overeenstemmen met als afwijken van de intenties van de vertegenwoordigers van de verandering (Bartunek et al., 2006, p. 202). De perceptie van een verandering kan een aanzienlijke invloed hebben op de relaties tussen antecedenten en attitude ten opzichte van verandering en dus ook op de effectiviteit van managementinterventies. De resultaten van dit onderzoek laten bijvoorbeeld zien dat de perceptie van het type organisatieverandering de relatie tussen antecedenten en de attitude ten opzichte van verandering modereert. Dit impliceert dat managementinterventies waarvan bekend is dat ze leiden tot positieve reacties van medewerkers tijdens geplande veranderingen mogelijk minder sterke of zelf tegengestelde reacties opleveren wanneer ze worden toegepast tijdens een verandering die wordt gepercipieerd als ongepland. Een van de meest cruciale factoren die het interpretatieproces beïnvloedt is informatie die medewerkers ontvangen over de verandering. Het leveren en faciliteren van geschikte informatie over een verandering genereert niet alleen meer positieve attitudes ten opzichte van verandering, het draagt ook bij aan het creëren (of onderhouden) van een organisatieklimaat dat bevorderlijk is voor verandering. Praktijkprofessionals kunnen tijdens organisatieveranderingen voordeel hebben van een kritische toetsing of concrete communicatieactiviteiten bijdragen aan zowel (1) de realistische perceptie van een medewerker over de karakteristieken van de verandering, het veranderingsproces en de doelstellingen van de verandering, als aan (2) het beantwoorden van de ‘what’s in it for me’ vraag door de individuele medewerker. Daarnaast zouden praktijkprofessionals moeten nagaan of dit geldt voor alle medewerkers waarop de verandering van invloed is, rekening houdend met hun individuele informatiebehoeften en de diversiteit in arbeidsgerelateerde afspraken en psychologische contracten.

De derde praktische implicatie betreft de dimensionaliteit van de attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van verandering. Vaak is de aandacht van verandermanagement primair gericht op het gedrag van medewerkers, d.w.z. op waarneembare reacties op een organisatieverandering. Echter, wanneer emoties en gedachten niet expliciet worden geuit, dan betekent dit nog niet dat ze er niet zijn. Onvoldoende aandacht voor de affectieve en cognitieve reacties van medewerkers tijdens organisatieveranderingen geeft management een incompleet beeld van de algehele attitude van medewerkers ten opzichte van de verandering. Dit bemoeilijkt

het voorspellen van zowel korte als lange termijn gevolgen. Het faciliteren van de dialoog met en tussen medewerkers over hun gevoelens en gedachten met betrekking tot de verandering is daarom cruciaal. Echter, hierbij dienen leiders en managers zich te realiseren dat voor *oprechte* interesse in de gevoelens en gedachten van medewerkers met betrekking tot een verandering mogelijk een aanzienlijke aanpassing van mindsets, overtuigingen en gebruikelijke verandermanagement en communicatieactiviteiten noodzakelijk is.

De vierde praktische implicatie van dit onderzoek komt voort uit de vorige implicaties en betreft de organisatiestructuur tijdens de implementatie van veranderingen. Leiders van organisaties moeten zich realiseren dat het vanwege de trends die eerder zijn beschreven nagenoeg onmogelijk is geworden voor centraal en top-down georganiseerd verandermanagement om hun verandermanagement- en communicatiebenaderingen adequaat aan te laten sluiten bij de toenemende verscheidenheid aan individuele behoeften. Er wordt in deze thesis daarom geopperd om vanuit een psychologisch contract perspectief verandermanagement te incorporeren in operationeel management. Het hebben van inzicht in, en een dialoog over het psychologisch contract van medewerkers helpt professionals in de praktijk om organisatieverandering adequaat te ontwerpen, te managen en te communiceren, waarbij een ernstige schending van het psychologisch contract wordt voorkomen en waarbij het psychologisch contract continu accommodeert aan nieuwe situaties.

Glossary

- *Psychological contract*: the individual's beliefs about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between an employee and an employer (Rousseau, 1990).
- *Psychological contract fulfillment*: the discrepancy between an employee's understanding of what was promised and the employee's perception of what he or she has actually received (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).
- *Attitude towards change*: a tridimensional state composed of affective, behavioral and cognitive responses to change (Bouckennooghe, 2010).
- *Affective dimension of attitude towards change*: an individual's feelings, moods and emotions about an organizational change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006).
- *Behavioral dimension of attitude towards change*: an employee's actions or intentions to act in response to an organizational change (Oreg, 2006).
- *Cognitive dimension of attitude towards change*: an employee's evaluative thoughts and beliefs about a change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Oreg, 2006).
- *Pre-change antecedents*: conditions that influence a change recipient's attitude towards change, but which are independent of the organizational change and existed prior to the introduction of the change (Oreg et al., 2011).
- *Change antecedents*: conditions of the change itself that influence a change recipient's attitude towards change (Oreg et al., 2011).
- *Trust*: one's expectations or beliefs regarding the likelihood that another's future actions will be favorable, or at least not detrimental, to one's interests (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).
- *Organizational commitment*: the relative strength of an individual's identification with, involvement in and loyalty to a particular organization (Steers, 1977; Fenton-O'Creevy, Winfrow, Lydka & Morris, 1997).
- *Engagement*: a positive work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli, Bakker & van Rhenen, 2009).
- *Change history*: the extent to which an individual employee perceives that past organizational changes were successfully implemented by the

organization and its management (Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997; Metselaar, 1997; Devos et al., 2007).

- *Change information*: the extent to which the employee perceives that information about the change is received timely, is useful, is adequate and is responsive to his or her questions about the change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994).
- *Perceived need for change*: the perceived discrepancy between a present state and a desired end-state (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993).
- *Turnover intention*: the subjective probability that an individual will leave his or her organization within a certain period of time (Zhao et al., 2007).

Appendix A: Psychological Contract Scale

In study 4, 5 and 6 the short version of the New Tilburg Psychological Contract Questionnaire developed by Freese, Schalk and Croon (2008) was used to assess psychological contract fulfillment. This scale consists of the six dimensions of job content, career development, social atmosphere, organization policies, work-life balance and rewards. Per dimension the respondents were presented with four potential organizational obligations, for which they needed to indicate to what extent they felt that their employer was obliged to offer these aspects. The main purpose of these items was to properly frame each dimension. After each set of items, the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the organization had fulfilled its obligations with regard to the particular dimension. This was done on a five-point scale, ranging from 'much less than expected' (1) to 'much more than expected' (5). The average of the six fulfillment scores was included in the analyses. In this Appendix the English², Dutch³ and German⁴ versions of the psychological contract scale are presented.

² The English version of the psychological contract scale was used in study 4, 5 and 6.

³ The Dutch version of the psychological contract scale was used in study 4, 5 and 6.

⁴ The German version of the psychological contract scale was used in study 4 and 6.

English version of the psychological contract scale

Response scale for the English items numbered 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d :

- 1 - Not at all
- 2 - Slightly
- 3 - Somewhat
- 4 - Moderately
- 5 - To a great extent

Response scale for the English items numbered 2:

- 1 - Much less than expected
- 2 - Less than expected
- 3 - As expected
- 4 - More than expected
- 5 - Much more than expected

Items:

Job content

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - Variation in your work
 - 1b - Challenging work
 - 1c - Interesting work
 - 1d - Autonomy in your work
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to job content?

Career development

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - Career opportunities
 - 1b - Training and education
 - 1c - Coaching on the job
 - 1d - Professional development opportunities
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to career development?

Social atmosphere

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - Good working atmosphere
 - 1b - Good cooperation
 - 1c - Support from colleagues
 - 1d - Appreciation and recognition
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to social atmosphere?

Organization policies

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - A fair supervisor
 - 1b - Clear and fair rules and regulations
 - 1c - Open communication
 - 1d - Ethical policies concerning society and environment
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to organization policies?

Work-life balance

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - Consideration of personal circumstances
 - 1b - Opportunity to schedule your own holidays
 - 1c - Working at home
 - 1d - Adjustment of working hours to fit personal life
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to work-life balance?

Rewards

- 1 - To what extent do you consider your employer has the obligation to offer you the following?
 - 1a - Employment security
 - 1b - Appropriate salary
 - 1c - Good benefit package
 - 1d - Pay for performance
- 2 - To what extent did your employer fulfill the obligations with regard to rewards?

Dutch version of the psychological contract scale

Response scale for the Dutch items numbered 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d :

- 1 - Totaal niet
- 2 - Nauwelijks
- 3 - Enigszins
- 4 - In grote mate
- 5 - In zeer grote mate

Response scale for the Dutch items numbered 2:

- 1 - Veel minder dan verwacht
- 2 - Minder dan verwacht
- 3 - Zoals verwacht
- 4 - Meer dan verwacht
- 5 - Veel meer dan verwacht

Items:

Inhoud van het werk

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Afwisselend werk
 - 1b - Uitdagend werk
 - 1c - Interessant werk
 - 1d - Autonomie
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van de inhoud van uw werk?

Loopbaanontwikkeling

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Loopbaanmogelijkheden
 - 1b - Trainingen en opleidingen
 - 1c - Coaching in het werk
 - 1d - Brede professionele ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van uw loopbaanontwikkeling?

Sociale sfeer

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Goede werksfeer
 - 1b - Mogelijkheden om plezierig samen te werken
 - 1c - Steun door collega's
 - 1d - Waardering
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van de sociale sfeer?

Organisatiebeleid

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Een rechtvaardige leidinggevende
 - 1b - Duidelijke en rechtvaardige regels
 - 1c - Open communicatie
 - 1d - Ethisch beleid ten aanzien van maatschappij en omgeving
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van het organisatiebeleid?

Werk-privé balans

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Begrip voor persoonlijke omstandigheden
 - 1b - Zelf vakantiedagen kunnen inplannen
 - 1c - Thuiswerken
 - 1d - Werktijden af kunnen stemmen op privé-leven
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van uw werk-privé balans?

Beloningen

- 1 - In hoeverre vindt u dat de organisatie de verplichting heeft u het volgende te bieden?
 - 1a - Werkzekerheid
 - 1b - Passend salaris
 - 1c - Beloningen voor bijzondere prestaties
 - 1d - Passende secundaire arbeidsvoorwaarden
- 2 - In hoeverre heeft de organisatie voldaan aan de verplichtingen ten aanzien van uw beloningen?

German version of the psychological contract scale

Response scale for the German items numbered 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d :

- 1 - Überhaupt nicht
- 2 - Kaum
- 3 - Irgendwie
- 4 - In großem Umfang
- 5 - In sehr großem Umfang

Response scale for the German items numbered 2:

- 1 - Viel weniger als erwartet
- 2 - Weniger als erwartet
- 3 - Wie erwartet
- 4 - Mehr als erwartet
- 5 - Viel mehr als erwartet

Items:

Arbeitsinhalt

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Abwechslung in Ihrer Arbeit
 - 1b - Herausfordernde Arbeit
 - 1c - Interessante Arbeit
 - 1d - Selbstständigkeit bei Ihrer Arbeit
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich des Arbeitsinhaltes erfüllt?

Berufliche Weiterentwicklung

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten
 - 1b - Weiterbildungsmöglichkeiten
 - 1c - Weiterbildung während der Arbeit (On-the-job Training -
 - 1d - Berufliche Weiterentwicklungsmöglichkeiten
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich Ihrer beruflichen Weiterentwicklung erfüllt?

Arbeitsatmosphäre

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Gute Arbeitsatmosphäre
 - 1b - Gute Zusammenarbeit
 - 1c - Unterstützung von den Kollegen
 - 1d - Anerkennung und Bestätigung
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich der Arbeitsatmosphäre erfüllt?

Unternehmensgrundsätze

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Einen fairen Vorgesetzten
 - 1b - Deutliche und faire Regeln und Vorschriften
 - 1c - Offene Kommunikation
 - 1d - Ethische Grundsätze in Bezug auf die Gesellschaft und Umwelt
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich der Unternehmensgrundsätze erfüllt?

Vereinbarkeit von Berufs- und Privatleben

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Berücksichtigung persönlicher Umstände
 - 1b - Möglichkeit den eigenen Urlaub festzulegen
 - 1c - Von zu Hause aus arbeiten
 - 1d - Anpassung der Arbeitsstunden an das persönliche Leben
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich der Vereinbarkeit von Berufs- und Privatleben erfüllt?

Vergütung

- 1 - Inwieweit hat, Ihrer Meinung nach, Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtung Ihnen das Folgende zu bieten?
 - 1a - Arbeitsplatzsicherheit
 - 1b - Angemessenes Gehalt
 - 1c - Gute Zusatzleistungen
 - 1d - Leistungsbezogene Vergütung
- 2 - Inwieweit hat Ihr Arbeitgeber die Verpflichtungen bezüglich der Vergütung erfüllt?

Appendix B: Attitude Towards Change Scale

*English version of the attitude towards change scale*⁵

Response scale:

- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neither agree, nor disagree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly agree

Items:

- 1 - I am afraid of the change*
- 2 - I have a bad feeling about the change*
- 3 - I am quite excited about the change
- 4 - The change makes me upset*
- 5 - I am stressed by the change*
- 6 - I look for ways to prevent the change from taking place*
- 7 - I protest against the change*
- 8 - I complain about the change to my colleagues*
- 9 - I present my objections regarding the change to management*
- 10 - I speak rather highly of the change to others
- 11 - I believe that the change will harm the way things are done the in organization*
- 12 - I think that it is a negative thing that we are going through this change*
- 13 - I believe that the change will make my job harder*
- 14 - I believe that the change will benefit the organization
- 15 - I believe that I can personally benefit from the change

⁵ The English version of the attitude towards change scale was used in study 4, 5 and 6; The scale is based on the *change attitude* scale developed by Oreg (2006); Items marked with an asterisk (*) were reverse coded.

Dutch version of the attitude towards change scale⁶

Response scale:

- 1 - Zeer oneens
- 2 - Oneens
- 3 - Neutraal
- 4 - Eens
- 5 - Zeer eens

Items:

- 1 - Ik ben bang voor de verandering*
- 2 - Ik heb een slecht gevoel over de verandering*
- 3 - Ik ben vrij enthousiast over de verandering
- 4 - De verandering verontrust me*
- 5 - Ik voel me gestrest door de verandering*
- 6 - Ik zoek naar manieren om het plaatsvinden van de verandering tegen te houden*
- 7 - Ik protesteer tegen de verandering*
- 8 - Ik klaag over de verandering tegen mijn collega's*
- 9 - Ik maak mijn bezwaren tegen de verandering kenbaar bij het management*
- 10 - Ik spreek tegen anderen behoorlijk positief over de verandering
- 11 - Ik geloof dat de verandering de manier waarop dingen in de organisatie worden gedaan, zal aantasten*
- 12 - Ik denk dat het negatief is dat we deze verandering doormaken*
- 13 - Ik geloof dat de verandering mijn werk moeilijker zal maken*
- 14 - Ik geloof dat de verandering voordelig zal zijn voor de organisatie
- 15 - Ik geloof dat ik persoonlijk voordeel zal hebben van de verandering

⁶ The Dutch version of the attitude towards change scale was used in study 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6; The scale is based on the *change attitude* scale developed by Oreg (2006); In study 3, 4, 5 and 6, the items marked with an asterisk (*) were reverse coded; Because in study 1 the negatively phrased label *resistance to change* was used instead of the label *attitude towards change*, the items marked without an asterisk (*) were reverse coded; Because in study 3 the change related items referred to a change that had either occurred in the recent past or that was occurring at the moment, the items were phrased in past tense, in accordance with the original scale of Oreg (2006).

*German version of the attitude towards change scale⁷**Response scale:*

- 1 - Stimme überhaupt nicht zu
- 2 - Stimme nicht zu
- 3 - Weder noch
- 4 - Stimme zu
- 5 - Stimme voll und ganz zu

Items:

- 1 - Ich habe Angst vor dieser Veränderung*
- 2 - Ich habe ein schlechtes Gefühl bezüglich dieser Veränderung*
- 3 - Ich bin ziemlich gespannt bezüglich dieser Veränderung
- 4 - Diese Veränderung regt mich auf*
- 5 - Diese Veränderung stresst mich*
- 6 - Ich versuche Wege zu finden, diese Veränderung zu verhindern*
- 7 - Ich erhebe Einwände gegen diese Veränderung*
- 8 - Ich beklage mich über diese Veränderung bei Kollegen*
- 9 - Ich äußere meine Einwände bezüglich dieser Veränderung gegenüber Vorgesetzten*
- 10 - Gegenüber anderen äußere ich mich eher positiv über diese Veränderung
- 11 - Ich glaube, dass diese Veränderung der Art und Weise wie Dinge in diesem Unternehmen gehandhabt werden, schaden würde*
- 12 - Ich denke, dass es negativ ist, dass wir diese Veränderung durchmachen*
- 13 - Ich glaube, dass diese Veränderung meinen Job schwieriger machen wird*
- 14 - Ich glaube, dass das Unternehmen von dieser Veränderung profitieren wird
- 15 - Ich glaube, dass ich persönlich von dieser Veränderung profitieren könnte

⁷ The German version of the attitude towards change scale was used in study 4 and 6; The scale is based on the *change attitude* scale developed by Oreg (2006); Items marked with an asterisk (*) were reverse coded.

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Sjoerd van den Heuvel was born in Weert in 1984. After finishing pre-university secondary school (VWO) at the Philips van Horne SG in Weert in 2002, Sjoerd moved from Nederweert to Tilburg to study at Tilburg University. In 2007 he earned his master's degree in Organization Studies, with a minor in Human Resource Studies. At the beginning of 2008, Sjoerd started working at the People & Performance group of Capgemini Consulting in Utrecht, where he found the opportunity to combine his job as a management consultant with a Ph.D. research at the Oldendorff Research Institute of Tilburg University. Sjoerd currently lives in Utrecht.

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